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LIFE AND WORKS  
OF  
ROBERT BURNS.



*David Hutchesson*

THE

LIFE AND WORKS

OF

ROBERT BURNS.

EDITED BY ROBERT CHAMBERS.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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C O N T E N T S.

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\* \* \* The Italic letters indicate the publication in which the several compositions respectively appeared: see note prefixed to the Contents of Volume I. Pieces which have not appeared in any previous edition of the poet's works are marked *n*. The letter *o* refers to the authorised edition of the Letters to Clarinda, Edinburgh, 1843.

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LIFE AND WORKS  
OF  
ROBERT BURNS.

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DUMFRIES.

DECEMBER 1791—JULY 1796—(CONTINUED.)

WE have seen that, in July 1793, when Burns was asserting his independence of remuneration for his songs, he was in circumstances to render the receipt of a little money highly desirable. It was a time of general difficulty and distress, in consequence of the disturbance which the war created in the usual course of commerce, and the additional burdens which it threw upon the country. Consols, which had been at 96 in the beginning of the preceding year, were down to 78. In the month of July, the number of Scottish bankrupts was forty-three, or about four times the average. Burns suffered among the rest, for an extra income which he derived from the unloading of foreign vessels was now at an end.

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TO MR PETER HILL.

[DUMFRIES, July 1793 ?]

MY DEAR SIR—\* \* \* \* Now that business is over, how are you, and how do you weather this accursed time? God only knows what will be the consequence; but in the meantime the country, at least in our part of it, is still progressive to the devil. For my part,

'I jouk, and let the jaw flee o'er.'<sup>1</sup> As my hopes in this world are but slender, I am turning rapidly devotee, in the prospect of sharing largely in the world to come.

How is old sinful Smellie coming on? Is there any talk of his second volume? If you meet with my much-valued old friend, Colonel Dunbar of the Crochallan Fencibles, remember me most affectionately to him. Alas! not unfrequently, when my heart is in a wandering humour, I live past scenes over again. To my mind's eye, you, Dunbar, Cleghorn, Cunningham, &c. present their friendly phiz[es], and my bosom aches with tender recollections. Adieu!

R. B.

In the latter part of July, the poet had an excursion through Galloway with his friend Mr Syme, who communicated to Dr Currie an animated account of their adventures:—

'I got Burns a gray Highland shelty to ride on. We dined the first day, 27th July 1793, at Glendonwyne's of Parton—a beautiful situation on the banks of the Dee. In the evening, we walked out, and ascended a gentle eminence, from which we had as fine a view of Alpine scenery as can well be imagined. A delightful soft evening shewed all its wilder as well as its grander graces. Immediately opposite, and within a mile of us, we saw Airds, a charming romantic place, where dwelt Lowe, the author of *Mary weep no more for me*.<sup>2</sup> This was classical ground for Burns. He viewed "the highest hill which rises o'er the source of Dee," and would have stayed till "the passing spirit" had appeared, had we not resolved to reach Kenmure that night. We arrived as Mr and Mrs Gordon<sup>3</sup> were sitting down to supper.

'Here is a genuine baron's seat. The castle, an old building, stands on a large natural moat. In front, the river Ken winds for several miles through the most fertile and beautiful *holm*,<sup>4</sup> till it expands into a lake twelve miles long, the banks of which, on the south, present a fine and soft landscape of green knolls, natural wood, and here and there a gray rock. On the north, the aspect is great, wild, and, I may say, tremendous. In short, I can

<sup>1</sup> A Scottish proverbial expression, as much as to say, 'I duck, and let the wave pass over me.'

<sup>2</sup> A beautiful and well-known ballad, which begins thus—

'The moon had climbed the highest hill  
Which rises o'er the source of Dee;  
And from the eastern summit shed  
Its silver light on tower and tree.'

<sup>3</sup> Mr Gordon was representative of the Viscounts Kenmure—a title restored in his person in 1824.

<sup>4</sup> The level low ground on the banks of a river or stream. This word should be adopted from the Scottish, as, indeed, ought several others of the same nature. That dialect is singularly copious and exact in the denominations of natural objects.

—CURRIE.

scarcely conceive a scene more terribly romantic than the castle of Kenmure. Burns thinks so highly of it, that he meditates a description of it in poetry: indeed, I believe he has begun the work. We spent three days with Mr Gordon, whose polished hospitality is of an original and endearing kind. Mrs Gordon's lap-dog, *Echo*, was dead. She would have an epitaph for him. Several had been made. Burns was asked for one. This was setting Hercules to his distaff. He disliked the subject, but to please the lady, he would try. Here is what he produced—

“In wood and wild, ye warbling throng,  
Your heavy loss deplore!  
Now half extinct your powers of song,  
Sweet Echo is no more.

Ye jarring, screeching things around,  
Scream your discordant joys!  
Now half your din of tuneless song  
With Echo silent lies.”

‘We left Kenmure and went to Gatehouse. I took him the moor-road, where savage and desolate regions extended wide around. The sky was sympathetic with the wretchedness of the soil; it became lowering and dark. The hollow winds sighed, the lightnings gleamed, the thunder rolled. The poet enjoyed the awful scene: he spoke not a word, but seemed rapt in meditation. In a little while, the rain began to fall; it poured in floods upon us. For three hours did the wild elements *rumble their belly full* upon our defenceless heads. *Oh! oh! 'twas foul.* We got utterly wet; and, to revenge ourselves, Burns insisted at Gatehouse on our getting utterly drunk.

‘From Gatehouse, we went next day to Kirkcudbright, through a fine country. But here I must tell you that Burns had got a pair of *jemmy* boots for the journey, which had been thoroughly wet, and which had been dried in such manner that it was not possible to get them on again. The brawny poet tried force, and tore them to shreds. A whiffling vexation of this sort is more trying to the temper than a serious calamity. We were going to St Mary’s Isle, the seat of the Earl of Selkirk, and the forlorn Burns was discomfited at the thought of his ruined boots. A sick stomach and a headache lent their aid, and the man of verse was quite *accabé*. I attempted to reason with him. Mercy on us, how he did fume and rage! Nothing could reinstate him in temper. I tried various expedients, and at last hit on one that

succeeded: I shewed him the house of [Garlieston?<sup>1</sup>], across the Bay of Wigton. Against [the Earl of Galloway?<sup>2</sup>], with whom he was offended, he expectorated his spleen, and regained a most agreeable temper. He was in a most epigrammatic humour indeed! He afterwards fell on humbler game. There is one \* \* \* \* \* whom he does not love: he had a passing blow at him—

“When —, deceased, to the devil went down,  
‘Twas nothing would serve him but Satan’s own crown;  
Thy fool’s head, quoth Satan, that crown shall wear never,  
I grant thou’rt as wicked, but not quite so clever.”

‘Well, I am to bring you to Kirkcudbright along with our poet without boots. I carried the torn ruins across my saddle in spite of his fulminations, and in contempt of appearances; and, what is more, Lord Selkirk<sup>3</sup> carried them in his coach to Dumfries. He insisted they were worth mending.<sup>4</sup>

‘We reached Kirkcudbright about one o’clock. I had promised that we should dine with one of the first men in our country, J. Dalzell.<sup>5</sup> But Burns was in a wild and obstreperous humour, and swore he would not dine where he should be under the smallest restraint. We prevailed, therefore, on Mr Dalzell to dine with us in the inn, and had a very agreeable party. In the evening, we set out for St Mary’s Isle. Robert had not absolutely regained the milkiness of good temper, and it occurred once or twice to him, as he rode along, that St Mary’s Isle was the seat of a lord; yet that lord was not an aristocrat, at least in his sense of the word. We arrived about eight o’clock, as the family were at tea

<sup>1</sup> Left blank by Currie.

<sup>2</sup> Also left blank by Currie.

<sup>3</sup> This was the formal Lord Selkirk, of whom Sir Walter Scott tells so amusing an anecdote in his *Malagrowther Letters*.

<sup>4</sup> Mr R. Cole, of London, preserves in his curious collection of original papers, several of the accounts for household and other articles furnished by Dumfries tradesmen to Robert Burns. It is just possible that the reader may feel some interest in learning that the bard had his boots from Robert Anderson, at L.1, 2s. a pair, being four times the price of a pair of men’s shoes in those days. This is so respectable a price in relation to our poet’s income, that one cannot much wonder at his vexation in losing his ‘jemmy boots.’

<sup>5</sup> John Dalzell of Barncroch, near Kirkcudbright, was a man of mirthful spirit and social character, highly calculated to gain the love of our bard; and accordingly they were very good friends. Mr Dalzell was also on intimate terms with Mr Gordon of Kenmure, who once sent him a present of a snuff *mull*. The acknowledgment of the gift was in much the same terms as those which Burns might have been expected to use on a similar occasion :

‘Your present I received, and letter;  
No compliment could please me better.  
EX DONO KENMURE I’ll put on it,  
And crown it wi’ a silver bonnet,  
In spite of a’ the deils in —,  
Your humble servant,

JOHN DALZELL.’

and coffee. St Mary's Isle is one of the most delightful places that can, in my opinion, be formed by the assemblage of every soft but not tame object which constitutes natural and cultivated beauty. But not to dwell on its external graces, let me tell you that we found all the ladies of the family (all beautiful) at home, and some strangers; and, among others, who but Urbani!<sup>1</sup> The Italian sang us many Scottish songs, accompanied with instrumental music. The two young ladies of Selkirk sang also. We had the song of *Lord Gregory*, which I asked for, to have an opportunity of calling on Burns to recite his ballad to that tune. He did recite it; and such was the effect, that a dead silence ensued. It was such a silence as a mind of feeling naturally preserves when it is touched with that enthusiasm which banishes every other thought but the contemplation and indulgence of the sympathy produced. Burns's *Lord Gregory* is, in my opinion, a most beautiful and affecting ballad. The fastidious critic may perhaps say, some of the sentiments and imagery are of too elevated a kind for such a style of composition; for instance, "Thou bolt of heaven that passest by;" and, "Ye mustering thunder," &c.; but this is a cold-blooded objection, which will be *said* rather than *felt*.

'We enjoyed a most happy evening at Lord Selkirk's. We had, in every sense of the word, a feast, in which our minds and our senses were equally gratified. The poet was delighted with his company, and acquitted himself to admiration. The lion that had raged so violently in the morning, was now as mild and gentle as a lamb. Next day we returned to Dumfries; and so ends our peregrination. I told you that, in the midst of the storm, on the wilds of Kenmure, Burns was rapt in meditation. What do you think he was about? He was charging the English army, along with Bruce, at Bannockburn. He was engaged in the same manner on our ride home from St Mary's Isle, and I did not disturb him. Next day, he produced me the following address of Bruce to his troops, and gave me a copy for Dalzell:

"Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled," &c.

By the kindness of Mr Joseph Train, I am enabled to add a statement by Mr Carson, one of the gentlemen whom Burns and Syme met at Kenmure:—

'The only friends of the host and hostess invited to meet the travellers, Burns and Syme, at Kenmure, were the Rev. John Gillespie, the highly-esteemed minister of the parish (Kells), and myself.

<sup>1</sup> Pietro Urbani, an Italian musician, now settled in Edinburgh. He edited a collection of the Song-Music of Scotland.

'On the evening preceding their departure, the bard having expressed his intention of climbing to the top of "the highest hill that rises o'er the source of Dee," there to see the arbour of Lowe, the author of the celebrated song, *Mary's Dream*, Mr Gordon proposed that they should all sail down the loch in his barge *Glenkens*, to the Airds Hill below Lowe's seat. Seeing that this proposal was intended in compliment by the worthy host both to the bard and to Mr Gillespie, who had been the patron of Lowe, the gentlemen all concurred; and the weather proving propitious next morning, the vessel soon dropt down to the foot of Loch Ken with all the party on board. Meanwhile, Mr Gordon's groom led the travellers' horses round to the Boat-o'-Rhone, saddled and bridled, that each rider might mount on descending from the poet's seat; but the barge unfortunately grounded before reaching the proposed landing-place—an obstruction not anticipated by any of the party. Mr Gordon, with the assistance of an oar, vaulted from the prow of the little vessel to the beach, and was soon followed in like manner by Mr Syme and myself; thus leaving only the venerable pastor of Kells and the bard on board. The former, being too feeble to jump, as we had done, to land, expressed a desire to remain in the vessel till Mr Gordon and I returned; upon hearing which, the generous bard instantly slipt into the water, which was, however, so deep as to wet him to the knees. After a short entreaty, he succeeded in getting the clergyman on his shoulders; on observing which, Mr Syme raised his hands, laughed immoderately, and exclaimed: "Well, Burns, of all the men on earth, you are the last that I could have expected to see *priest-ridden!*" We laughed also, but Burns did not seem to enjoy the joke. He made no reply, but carried his load silently through the reeds to land.

'When Mr Syme's account of this excursion with the bard into Galloway appeared in Dr Currie's first edition of the *Life and Works of Robert Burns*, the Glenkens people, who were actors in this part of the drama, were very much surprised to find the above incident not even alluded to; but we plainly perceived that Syme had only taken a few incidents of the journey as pegs to hang other drapery upon. We were all fully satisfied that it was by the bard's wading in the loch that his *new boots* were so thoroughly wet, and that the choler or independence next day manifested by him to Syme was only the result of his wounded feelings at having been made such a laughing-stock by his friend for merely rendering the assistance due by common humanity to old age or infirmity, which Mr Gordon and myself charged ourselves afterwards for having overlooked in that instance.'"

The impulsive, irritable, wayward temper of Burns is strongly

shewn in Mr Syme's narration. This, however, is not the Burns of former days: it is the Burns of a troublous time, exasperated by national movements in politics contrary to his judgment and best feelings, and by a tyrannous control of circumstances over the natural privileges which he most dearly esteemed. Reflections on his own impulsive career, which had embayed him in a position destructive of his independence and humiliating to his pride, probably mingled with his mood. He growls and vents epigrams at persons with whom he was causelessly offended; he starts at the idea of going to the house of a nobleman, though that nobleman was a Whig, and the father of his old acquaintance Lord Daer, by whose easy manners he had been disabused of earlier prejudices of the like kind, and who was now distinguishing himself by his demonstrations in favour of that cause which Burns had at heart. These are traits which we could not have expected from the poet in the days of Blair and Castle-Gordon. It is worthy of remark, that Syme himself, Mr Gordon of Kenmure, Mr Dalzell, and the earl, were all Whigs. Burns had been from the first, notwithstanding his Jacobitism, taken up by that party; and his present circle of friends was mainly composed of it.

We see the aggravated sensitiveness of the poet in a letter written very soon after the excursion with Syme.

TO MISS CRAIK.<sup>1</sup>

DUMFRIES, August 1793.

MADAM—Some rather unlooked-for accidents have prevented my doing myself the honour of a second visit to Arbigland, as I was so hospitably invited, and so positively meant to have done. However, I still hope to have that pleasure before the busy months of harvest begin.

I enclose you two of my late pieces, as some kind of return for the pleasure I have received in perusing a certain MS. volume of poems in the possession of Captain Riddel. To repay one with an *old song* is a proverb whose force you, madam, I know, will not allow. What is said of illustrious descent is, I believe, equally true of a talent for poetry—none ever despised it who had pretensions to it. The fates and characters of the rhyming tribe often employ my thoughts when I am disposed to be melancholy. There is not, among all the martyrologies that ever were penned, so rueful a narrative as the lives of the poets. In the comparative view of wretches, the criterion is not what they are doomed to suffer, but how they are formed to bear. Take a being of our kind, give him a stronger imagination and a more delicate sensibility, which between them will ever engender a more ungovernable set of passions than are the usual lot of man; implant in him an irresistible impulse to some idle vagary,

<sup>1</sup> Daughter of Mr Craik of Arbigland, in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright.

such as arranging wild-flowers in fantastical nosegays, tracing the grasshopper to his haunt by his chirping song, watching the frisks of the little minnows in the sunny pool, or hunting after the intrigues of butterflies—in short, send him adrift after some pursuit which shall eternally mislead him from the paths of lucre, and yet curse him with a keener relish than any man living for the pleasures that lucre can purchase; lastly, fill up the measure of his woes by bestowing on him a spurning sense of his own dignity—and you have created a wight nearly as miserable as a poet. To you, madam, I need not recount the fairy pleasures the Muse bestows, to counterbalance this catalogue of evils. Bewitching poetry is like bewitching woman: she has in all ages been accused of misleading mankind from the councils of wisdom and the paths of prudence, involving them in difficulties, baiting them with poverty, branding them with infamy, and plunging them in the whirling vortex of ruin; yet where is the man but must own that all our happiness on earth is not worthy the name—that even the holy hermit's solitary prospect of paradisiacal bliss is but the glitter of a northern sun rising over a frozen region—compared with the many pleasures, the nameless raptures, that we owe to the lovely queen of the heart of man!

R. B.

## MR THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 1st August 1793.

DEAR SIR—I had the pleasure of receiving your last two letters, and am happy to find you are quite pleased with the appearance of the first book. When you come to hear the songs sung and accompanied, you will be charmed with them.

*The Bonnie Brucket Lassie* certainly deserves better verses, and I hope you will match her. *Cauld Kail in Aberdeen, Let me in this ae Night*, and several of the livelier airs, wait the Muse's leisure; these are peculiarly worthy of her choice gifts; besides, you'll notice that in airs of this sort the singer can always do greater justice to the poet than in the slower airs of *The Bush aboon Traquair, Lord Gregory*, and the like; for in the manner the latter were frequently sung, you must be contented with the sound without the sense. Indeed, both the airs and words are disguised by the very slow, languid, psalm-singing style in which they are too often performed; they lose animation and expression altogether, and instead of speaking to the mind, or touching the heart, they cloy upon the ear, and set us a-yawning!<sup>1</sup>

Your ballad, *There was a Lass, and she was Fair*, is simple and beautiful, and shall undoubtedly grace my collection.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I am tempted out of my usual track to remark the justice of this criticism. The slowness with which a certain class of the Scottish airs are sung, is assuredly much to be regretted.

<sup>2</sup> Mr Thomson had here added some verbal criticism, to which allusion was made in course by Burns.

BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

August 1793.

MY DEAR THOMSON—I hold the pen for our friend Clarke, who at present is studying the music of the spheres at my elbow. The Georgium Sidus he thinks is rather out of tune; so until he rectify that matter, he cannot stoop to terrestrial affairs.

He sends you six of the *rondeau* subjects, and if more are wanted, he says you shall have them.

Confound<sup>1</sup> your long stairs !

S. CLARKE.

BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

August 1793.

YOUR objection, my dear sir, to the passages in my song of *Logan Water*, is right in one instance; the phrase 'cruel joys' is there improper; but it is difficult to mend it: if I can, I will. The other passage you object to does not appear in the same light to me.

[Here Burns transcribed a song of six stanzas which he had just composed on the basis of an old song called, *Let me in this ae Night*. It is so much below the standard of his compositions of that class, that Currie had thought proper to leave it in the manuscript.]

I have tried my hand on *Robin Adair*, and, you will probably think, with little success; but it is such a cursed, cramp, out-of-the-way measure, that I despair of doing anything better to it.

PHILLIS THE FAIR.

TUNE—*Robin Adair*.

While larks with little wing  
Fanned the pure air,  
Tasting the breathing spring,  
Forth I did fare:  
Gay the sun's golden eye  
Peeped o'er the mountains high;  
Such thy morn! did I cry,  
Phillis the fair.

In each bird's careless song,  
Glad did I share;  
While yon wild-flowers among,  
Chance led me there:  
Sweet to the opening day,  
Rosebuds bent the dewy spray;  
Such thy bloom! did I say,  
Phillis the fair.

<sup>1</sup> So in Currie: in manuscript, a stronger word. The signature 'S. Clarke' is in Clarke's hand.

Down in a shady walk  
 Doves cooing were ;  
 I marked the cruel hawk  
 Caught in a snare :  
 So kind may fortune be,  
 Such make his destiny,  
 He who would injure thee,  
 Phillis the fair.

So much for namby-pamby. I may, after all, try my hand on it in Scots verse. There I always find myself most at home.

I have just put the last hand to the song I meant for *Cauld Kail in Aberdeen*.<sup>1</sup> If it suits you to insert it, I shall be pleased, as the heroine is a favourite of mine: if not, I shall also be pleased; because I wish, and will be glad, to see you act decidedly on the business. 'Tis a tribute as a man of taste, and as an editor, which you owe yourself.

Burns is understood to have in *Phillis the Fair* represented the tender feelings which Clarke entertained towards Miss Philadelphia M'Murdo, one of his pupils. This lady afterwards became Mrs Norman Lockhart of Carnwath.

#### MR THOMSON TO BURNS.

August 1793.

MY GOOD SIR—I consider it one of the most agreeable circumstances attending this publication of mine, that it has procured me so many of your much-valued epistles. Pray make my acknowledgments to St Stephen for the tunes: tell him I admit the justness of his complaint on my staircase, conveyed in his laconic postscript to your *jeu d'esprit*, which I perused more than once without discovering exactly whether your discussion was music, astronomy, or politics; though a sagacious friend, acquainted with the convivial habits of the poet and the musician, offered me a bet of two to one you were just drowning care together; that an empty bowl was the only thing that would deeply affect you, and the only matter you could then study how to remedy!

I shall be glad to see you give *Robin Adair* a Scottish dress. Peter is furnishing him with an English suit for a change, and you are well matched together. Robin's air is excellent, though he certainly has an out-of-the-way measure as ever poor Parnassian wight was plagued with. I wish you would invoke the Muse for a single elegant stanza, to be substituted for the concluding objectionable verses of *Down the Burn, Davie*, so that this most exquisite song may no longer be excluded from good company.

<sup>1</sup> The song now usually called *Puirtilh Cauld*.

Mr Allan has made an inimitable drawing from your *John Anderson my jo*, which I am to have engraved as a frontispiece to the humorous class of songs: you will be quite charmed with it, I promise you. The old couple are seated by the fireside. Mrs Anderson, in great good-humour, is clapping John's shoulders, while he smiles and looks at her with such glee, as to shew that he fully recollects the pleasant days and nights when they were ‘first acquaint.’ The drawing would do honour to the pencil of Teniers.

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## BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

August 1793.

THAT crinkum - crankum tune, *Robin Adair*, has run so in my head, and I succeeded so ill in my last attempt, that I have ventured, in this morning’s walk, one essay more. You, my dear sir, will remember an unfortunate part of our worthy friend Cunningham’s story, which happened about three years ago. That struck my fancy, and I endeavoured to do the idea justice as follows :—

## HAD I A CAVE.

TUNE—*Robin Adair*.

Had I a cave on some wild distant shore,  
Where the winds howl to the waves’ dashing roar ;  
There would I weep my woes,  
There seek my lost repose,  
Till grief my eyes should close,  
Ne’er to wake more !

Falsest of womankind ! canst thou declare,  
All thy fond-plighted vows—fleeting as air !  
To thy new lover hie,  
Laugh o’er thy perjury ;  
Then in thy bosom try  
What peace is there !

By the way, I have met with a musical Highlander in Breadalbane’s Fencibles, which are quartered here, who assures me that he well remembers his mother singing Gaelic songs to both *Robin Adair* and *Gramachree*. They certainly have more of the Scotch than Irish taste in them.

This man comes from the vicinity of Inverness, so it could not be any intercourse with Ireland that could bring them; except what I shrewdly suspect to be the case—the wandering minstrels, harpers, and pipers, used to go frequently errant through the wilds both of

Scotland and Ireland, and so some favourite airs might be common to both. A case in point—they have lately, in Ireland, published an Irish air, as they say, called *Caun du delish*. The fact is, in a publication of Corri's a great while ago, you will find the same air, called a Highland one, with a Gaelic song set to it. Its name there, I think, is *Oran Gaoil*, and a fine air it is. Do ask honest Allan, or the Rev. Gaelic parson, about these matters.

Cunningham had wooed a young lady of many personal attractions ; but, on another lover presenting himself, with some superior pretensions of an extrinsic character, she deserted the poet's friend with a degree of coolness which seems to have for the time excited great and general surprise.

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#### BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

[19th] August 1793.

MY DEAR SIR—*Let me in this ae Night I will reconsider.* I am glad that you are pleased with my song, *Had I a Cave*, &c. as I liked it myself.

I walked out yesterday evening with a volume of the *Museum* in my hand, when, turning up *Allan Water*, *What Numbers shall the Muse repeat*, &c. as the words appeared to me rather unworthy of so fine an air, and recollecting that it is on your list, I sat and raved under the shade of an old thorn, till I wrote one to suit the measure. I may be wrong, but I think it not in my worst style. You must know that in Ramsay's *Tea-Table*, where the modern song first appeared, the ancient name of the tune, Allan says, is *Allan Water*, or *My Love Annie's very Bonnie*. This last has certainly been a line of the original song ; so I took up the idea, and, as you will see, have introduced the line in its place, which I presume it formerly occupied ; though I likewise give you a choosing line, if it should not hit the cut of your fancy :

#### BY ALLAN STREAM I CHANCED TO ROVE.

TUNE—*Allan Water*.

By Allan stream I chanced to rove,  
While Phœbus sank beyond Benledi ;  
The winds were whispering through the grove,  
The yellow corn was waving ready :  
I listened to a lover's sang,  
And thought on youthfu' pleasures mony ;  
And aye the wild-wood echoes rang—  
Oh, dearly do I love thee, Annie !

Oh, happy be the woodbine bower,  
 Nae nightly bogle make it eerie ;  
 Nor ever sorrow stain the hour,  
 The place and time I met my dearie !  
 Her head upon my throbbing breast,  
 She, sinking, said, ‘I’m thine for ever !’  
 While mony a kiss the ~~soul~~ imprest,  
 The sacred vow, we ~~never~~ should sever.

The haunt o’ Spring’s the primrose brae,  
 The Simmer joys the flocks to follow ;  
 How cheery through her shortening day,  
 Is Autumn, in her weeds o’ yellow !  
 But can they melt the glowing heart,  
 Or chain the soul in speechless pleasure ?  
 Or through each nerve the rapture dart,  
 Like meeting her, our bosom’s treasure ?

Bravo ! say I ; it is a good song. Should you think so too (not else), you can set the music to it, and let the other follow as English verses.

Autumn is my propitious season. I make more verses in it than all the year else. God bless you !<sup>1</sup>

## BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

August 1793.

You may readily trust, my dear sir, that any exertion in my power is heartily at your service. But one thing I must hint to you : the very name of Peter Pindar is of great service to your publication ; so get a verse from him now and then, though I have no objection, as well as I can, to bear the burden of the business.<sup>2</sup>

*Is Whistle, and I’ll come to you, my Lad, one of your airs ? I admire*

<sup>1</sup> ‘While he lived in Dumfries, he had three favourite walks : on the Doek-Green by the river-side—among the ruins of Lincluden College—and towards the Martindon-ford, on the north side of the Nith. This latter place was secluded, commanded a view of the distant hills, and the romantic towers of Lincluden, and afforded soft greensward banks to rest upon, and the sight and sound of the stream. Here he composed many of his finest songs. As soon as he was heard to hum to himself, his wife saw that he had something in his mind, and was prepared to see him snatch up his hat, and set silently off for his musing-ground. When by himself, and in the open air, his ideas arranged themselves in their natural order—words came at will ; and he seldom returned without having finished a song. In case of interruption, he set about completing it at the fireside ; he balanced himself on the hind-legs of his arm-chair, and rocking to and fro, continued to hum the tune, and seldom failed of success. When the verses were finished, he passed them through the ordeal of Mrs Burns’s voice ; listened attentively when she sang ; asked her if any of the words were difficult ; and when one happened to be too rough, he readily found a smoother—but he never, save at the resolute entreaty of a scientific musician, sacrificed sense to sound. The autumn was his favourite season, and the twilight his favourite hour of study.’—A. Cunningham.

<sup>2</sup> Dr Currie has transferred this paragraph from the present, its proper place, to the head of a subsequent letter.

it much, and yesterday I set the following verses to it. Urbani, whom I have met with here, begged them of me, as he admires the air much ; but as I understand that he looks with rather an evil eye on your work, I did not choose to comply. However, if the song does not suit your taste, I may possibly send it him. He is, *entre nous*, a narrow, contracted creature ; but he sings so delightfully, that whatever he introduces at your concert must have immediate celebrity. The set of the air which I had in my eye is in *Johnson's Museum*.

WHISTLE, AND I'LL COME TO YOU, MY LAD.

TUNE—*Whistle, and I'll come to you, my Lad.*

O whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad,  
 O whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad ;  
 Thoeng father and mither and a' should gae mad,  
 O whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad.

But warly tent, when ye come to court me,  
 And come na unless the back-yett be a-jee ;  
 Syne up the back-stile, and let naebody see,  
 And come as ye were na comin' to me.

At kirk, or at market, whene'er ye meet me,  
 Gang by me as though that ye cared nae a flie ;  
 But steal me a blink o' your bonnie black ee,  
 Yet look as ye were na lookin' at me.

Aye vow and protest that ye care na for me,  
 And whiles ye may lightly my beauty a wee ;  
 But court na anither, though jokin' ye be,  
 For fear that she wile your fancy frae me.<sup>1</sup>

Another favourite air of mine is *The Mucking o' Geordie's Byre*. When sung slow with expression, I have wished that it had had better poetry : that I have endeavoured to supply as follows :—

DOWN WINDING NITH I DID WANDER.

TUNE—*The Mucking o' Geordie's Byre.*

Adown winding Nith I did wander,  
 To mark the sweet flowers as they spring ;  
 Adown winding Nith I did wander,  
 Of Phillis to muse and to sing.

CHORUS.

Awa wi' your belles and your beauties,  
 They never wi' her can compare :  
 Whaever has met wi' my Phillis,  
 Has met wi' the queen o' the fair.

<sup>1</sup> The two first stanzas of this song had appeared in the second volume of the *Scots Musical Museum*.

The daisy amused my fond fancy,  
So artless, so simple, so wild ;  
Thou emblem, said I, o' my Phillis !  
For she is simplicity's child.

The rose-bud's the blush o' my charmer,  
Her sweet balmy lip when 'tis prest :  
How fair and how pure is the lily,  
But fairer and purer her breast.

Yon knot of gay flowers in the arbour,  
They ne'er wi' my Phillis can vie :  
Her breath is the breath o' the woodbine,  
Its dew-drop o' diamond her eye.

Her voice is the song of the morning,  
That wakes through the green-spreading grove,  
When Phœbus peeps over the mountains,  
On music, and pleasure, and love.

But, beauty, how frail and how fleeting—  
The bloom of a fine summer's day !  
While worth in the mind o' my Phillis  
Will flourish without a decay.

Mr Clarke begs you to give Miss Phillis a corner in your book, as she is a particular flame of his. She is a Miss Phillis M'Murdo, sister to 'Bonnie Jean.' They are both pupils of his. You shall hear from me the very first grist I get from my rhyming-mill.

A modern reader will be surprised by the terms in which Burns speaks of Peter Pindar, whose works are now condemned to oblivion. He certainly was a remarkable example of the extent to which moderate abilities, exerted in subserviency to popular prejudices, and with a ribald recklessness towards all true taste in literature, will carry their possessor on the way to what appears for the time literary distinction. It must ever be a humiliating consideration that this modern Aretin was richly pensioned by the booksellers, while Burns, the true sweet singer, lived in comparative poverty.

## BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

[28th] August 1793.

THAT tune, *Cauld Kail*, is such a favourite of yours, that I once more roved out yesterday for a gloamin-shot at the Muses ;<sup>1</sup> when

<sup>1</sup> *Gloamin*, twilight—probably from gloaming. A beautiful poetic word, which ought to be adopted in England. A gloamin-shot, a twilight interview.—CURRIE,

the Muse that presides o'er the shores of Nith, or rather my old inspiring dearest nymph, Coila, whispered me the following. I have two reasons for thinking that it was my early, sweet simple inspirer that was by my elbow, 'smooth gliding without step,' and pouring the song on my glowing fancy. In the first place, since I left Coila's native haunts, not a fragment of a poet has arisen to cheer her solitary musings, by catching inspiration from her, so I more than suspect that she has followed me hither, or at least makes me occasional visits ; secondly, the last stanza of this song I send you is the very words that Coila taught me many years ago, and which I set to an old Scots reel in *Johnson's Museum*.

**COME, LET ME TAKE THEE TO MY BREAST.**

AIR—*Cauld Kail.*

Come, let me take thee to my breast,  
And pledge we ne'er shall sunder ;  
And I shall spurn as vilest dust  
The wairld's wealth and grandeur :  
And do I hear my Jeanie own  
That equal transports move her ?  
I ask for dearest life alone  
That I may live to love her.

Thus in my arms, wi' all thy charms,  
I clasp my countless treasure ;  
I'll seek nae mair o' heaven to share,  
Than sic a moiment's pleasure :  
And by thy een sae bonnie blue,  
I swear I'm thine for ever !  
And on thy lips I seal my vow,  
And break it shall I never !

If you think the above will suit your idea of your favourite air, I shall be highly pleased. *The last Time I came o'er the Moor* I cannot meddle with as to mending it ; and the musical world have been so long accustomed to Ramsay's words, that a different song, though positively superior, would not be so well received. I am not fond of choruses to songs, so I have not made one for the foregoing.

**BURNS TO MR THOMSON.**

[28th] August 1793.

**DAINTY DAVIE.**

TUNE—*Dainty Davie.*

Now rosy May comes in wi' flowers,  
To deck her gay, green-spreading bowers ;  
And now come in my happy hours,  
To wander wi' my Davie.

## CHORUS.

Meet me on the warlock knowe,  
 Dainty Davie, dainty Davie;  
 There I'll spend the day wi' you,  
 My ain dear dainty Davie.

The crystal waters round us fa',  
 The merry birds are lovers a',  
 The scented breezes round us blaw  
 A-wandering wi' my Davie.

When purple morning starts the hare,  
 To steal upon her early fare,  
 Then through the dews I will repair,  
 To meet my faithfu' Davie.

When day, expiring in the west,  
 The curtain draws o' nature's rest,  
 I flee to his arms I loe best,  
 And that's my ain dear Davie.

So much for Davie. The chorus, you know, is to the low part of the tune. See Clarke's set of it in the *Museum*.

*N.B.*—In the *Museum*, they have drawled out the tune to twelve lines of poetry, which is — nonsense. Four lines of song, and four of chorus, is the way.

The tune of *Dainty Davie* had been in Burns's hands some years before, when he composed to it a song with the awkward burden, *The Gardener wi' his Paidle*.<sup>1</sup> His taste suggesting to him the impossibility of any such song becoming popular, he now put the verses into the above improved fashion. It is understood that the homely old song which Burns thus superseded was composed upon an adventure of the Rev. David Williamson, in the time of 'the Persecution.' Williamson died minister of St Cuthbert's, near Edinburgh, after having married seven wives.

The letters of this month shew a remarkable activity in song-writing. The commercial distresses of the country were great; the government was preparing to try Muir and Palmer for sedition, and no mercy was expected; the world, in Burns's opinion, was out of joint. Yet we see him full of enthusiasm in writing and criticising Scottish songs, and making only that faint glance at politics, in the remark on the Georgium Sidus. It must not be supposed from this fact, that he had forced himself into an indifference towards either the state of affairs in France, where the unfortunate Girondists were now perishing in the

<sup>1</sup> See volume iii., p. 109.

fields and on the scaffold, or to the progress of the reaction at home, which threatened to crush every sentiment of liberty in which England had formerly gloried. But the beauty of the season had come over him with its benign influence, and he gladly sought some relief from the exasperations of public affairs in the soothing blandishments of the Doric muse.

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## MR THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 1st Sept. 1793.

MY DEAR SIR—Since writing you last, I have received half-a-dozen songs, with which I am delighted beyond expression. The humour and fancy of *Whistle, and I'll come to you, my Lad*, will render it nearly as great a favourite as *Duncan Gray*. *Come, let me take thee to my Breast, Adown winding Nith*, and *By Allan Stream*, &c. are full of imagination and feeling, and sweetly suit the airs for which they are intended. *Had I a Cave on some wild distant Shore*, is a striking and affecting composition. Our friend, to whose story it refers, reads it with a swelling heart, I assure you. The union we are now forming, I think, can never be broken: these songs of yours will descend, with the music, to the latest posterity, and will be fondly cherished so long as genius, taste, and sensibility exist in our island.

While the Muse seems so propitious, I think it right to enclose a list of all the favours I have to ask of her—no fewer than twenty and three! I have burdened the pleasant Peter with as many as it is probable he will attend to: most of the remaining airs would puzzle the English poet not a little—they are of that peculiar measure and rhythm, that they must be familiar to him who writes for them.

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## BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

Sept. 1793.

You know that my pretensions to musical taste are merely a few of nature's instincts, untaught and untutored by art. For this reason many musical compositions, particularly where much of the merit lies in counterpoint, however they may transport and ravish the ears of you connoisseurs, affect my simple lug no otherwise than merely as melodious din. On the other hand, by way of amends, I am delighted with many little melodies, which the learned musician despises as silly and insipid. I do not know whether the old air, *Hey, tuttie taitie*, may rank among this number; but well I know that, with Fraser's hautboy,<sup>1</sup> it has often filled my eyes with tears.

<sup>1</sup> Fraser was many years after the hautboy-player in the orchestra of the Edinburgh theatre, where his solos were always greatly admired.

There is a tradition, which I have met with in many places in Scotland, that it was Robert Bruce’s march at the battle of Bannockburn. This thought, in my yesternight’s evening walk, warmed me to a pitch of enthusiasm on the theme of liberty and independence, which I threw into a kind of Scottish ode, fitted to the air, that one might suppose to be the gallant royal Scot’s address to his heroic followers on that eventful morning.

## BRUCE TO HIS MEN AT BANNOCKBURN.

TUNE—*Hey, tuttie taitie.*

Scots, wha hae wi’ Wallace bled,  
 Scots, wham Bruce has often led,  
 Welcome to your gory bed,  
 Or to victory !

Now’s the day, and now’s the hour ;  
 See the front o’ battle lour :  
 See approach proud Edward’s power—  
 Chains and slavery !

Wha will be a traitor knave ?  
 Wha can fill a coward’s grave ?  
 Wha sae base as be a slave ?  
 Let him turn and flee !

Wha for Scotland’s king and law  
 Freedom’s sword will strongly draw,  
 Freeman stand, or freeman fa’,  
 Let him follow me !

By oppression’s woes and pains !  
 By your sons in servile chains !  
 We will drain our dearest veins,  
 But they shall be free !

Lay the proud usurpers low !  
 Tyrants fall in every foe !  
 Liberty’s in every blow !—  
 Let us do or die !

So may God ever defend the cause of truth and liberty, as He did that day ! Amen.

P.S.—I shewed the air to Urbani, who was highly pleased with it, and begged me to make soft verses for it; but I had no idea of giving myself any trouble on the subject, till the accidental recollection of that glorious struggle for freedom, associated with the glowing ideas of some other struggles of the same nature, *not quite so ancient*, roused my rhyming mania. Clarke’s set of the tune, with his bass, you will find in the *Museum*, though I am afraid that the air is not what will entitle it to a place in your elegant selection.

So the magnificent ode of ‘Bruce to his Men’ sprang partly from the inspiration afforded by the success of the French in beating back the arrogant enemies of their republic! According to Mr Syme, in his letter on the Galloway excursion of July, Burns was engaged in the composition of this ode while riding in the storm from Kenmure to Gatehouse, and when passing on the second morning thereafter on his way from Kirkcudbright to Dumfries. Mr Syme adds, that the poet presented him with a copy of the poem next day, along with a second one for Mr Dalzell. There is a discrepancy here, which can only be cleared up by supposing that Mr Syme, writing at the distance of some years, had misapplied circumstances to dates, or been misled by his imagination. The discrepancy had been observed by Dr Currie; but he unfortunately adopted a way of overcoming the difficulty little creditable to himself, for he altered the expression ‘my yesternight’s evening walk’ into ‘my solitary wanderings’—a vitiation of the original letter, which has only been of late detected. I do not indeed see in Burns’s letter conclusive proof that the composition was not commenced or thought of during the Galloway excursion, for a person of all desirable fidelity of mind, in relating an indifferent matter to a friend, may give it in such an abbreviated form, or with such a suppression of particulars, as may amount to a kind of misrepresentation. For example—It is not doubted that Burns composed *Tam o’ Shanter*, as has been related, while wandering one day by the banks of the Nith, in the autumn of 1790; yet, on the 22d of January 1791, he says in a letter to Alexander Cunningham: ‘I have just finished a poem (*Tam o’ Shanter*), which you will receive enclosed.’ No one could have supposed from this expression that the whole poem had been produced at a heat three or four months before, and that only a few corrections at most had lately been administered to it by the hand of its author. It is impossible, however, to observe in this letter of September the expressions that he had thought no more of Urbani’s request till ‘the accidental recollection,’ &c. in his ‘yesternight’s evening walk,’ ‘warmed’ him ‘to a pitch of enthusiasm,’ and continue to believe that Burns had given Syme a copy the day after the conclusion of their excursion at the beginning of the preceding month. And an error being proved here, it may be the more doubted if Burns was at all engaged in such a subject of poetic meditation during that storm on the wilds of Kenmure.

## BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

[Sept. 1793.]

I DARESAY, my dear sir, that you will begin to think my correspondence is persecution. No matter, I can't help it: a ballad is my hobby-horse, which, though otherwise a simple sort of harmless idiotical beast enough, has yet this blessed headstrong property, that when once it has fairly made off with a hapless wight, it gets so enamoured with the tinkle-gingle, tinkle-gingle of its own bells, that it is sure to run poor pilgarlick, the bedlam jockey, quite beyond any useful point or post in the common race of men.

The following song I have composed for *Oran Gaoil*, the Highland air that you tell me in your last you have resolved to give a place to in your book. I have this moment finished the song, so you have it glowing from the mint. If it suit you, well! if not, 'tis also well!

## BEHOLD THE HOUR.

TUNE—*Oran Gaoil*.

Behold the hour, the boat arrive;  
 Thou goest, thou darling of my heart!  
 Severed from thee, can I survive?  
 But fate has willed, and we must part.  
 I'll often greet this surging swell,  
 Yon distant isle will often hail:  
 ‘E'en here I took the last farewell;  
 There latest marked her vanished sail.’

Along the solitary shore,  
 While flitting sea-fowl round me cry,  
 Across the rolling, dashing roar,  
 I'll westward turn my wistful eye:  
 Happy thou Indian grove, I'll say,  
 Where now my Nancy's path may be!  
 While through thy sweets she loves to stray,  
 Oh, tell me, does she muse on me?

## MR THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 5th Sept. 1793.

I BELIEVE it is generally allowed that the greatest modesty is the sure attendant of the greatest merit. While you are sending me verses that even Shakspeare might be proud to own, you speak of them as if they were ordinary productions! Your heroic ode is to me the noblest composition of the kind in the Scottish language. I

happened to dine yesterday with a party of your friends, to whom I read it. They were all charmed with it; entreated me to find out a suitable air for it, and reprobated the idea of giving it a tune so totally devoid of interest or grandeur as *Hey, tuttie taitie*. Assuredly your partiality for this tune must arise from the ideas associated in your mind by the tradition concerning it, for I never heard any person, and I have conversed again and again with the greatest enthusiasts for Scottish airs—I say, I never heard any one speak of it as worthy of notice.

I have been running over the whole hundred airs, of which I lately sent you the list; and I think *Lewie Gordon* is most happily adapted to your ode; at least with a very slight variation of the fourth line, which I shall presently submit to you. There is in *Lewie Gordon* more of the grand than the plaintive, particularly when it is sung with a degree of spirit, which your words would oblige the singer to give it. I would have no scruple about substituting your ode in the room of *Lewie Gordon*, which has neither the interest, the grandeur, nor the poetry, that characterise your verses. Now, the variation I have to suggest upon the last line of each verse—the only line too short for the air—is as follows :

- Verse 1st, Or to glorious victory.
- 2d, *Chains*—chains and slavery.
- 3d, Let him, *let him* turn and flee.
- 4th, Let him *bravely* follow me.
- 5th, But *they shall*, they shall be free.
- 6th, Let us, *let us* do or die !

If you connect each line with its own verse, I do not think you will find that either the sentiment or the expression loses any of its energy. The only line which I dislike in the whole of the song is, ‘Welcome to your gory bed.’ Would not another word be preferable to ‘welcome?’ In your next, I will expect to be informed whether you agree to what I have proposed. The little alterations I submit with the greatest deference.

The beauty of the verses you have made for *Oran Gaoil* will insure celebrity to the air.

Mr Thomson is here unfortunate in his criticism, particularly as to the choice of an air for Bruce’s Address. *Lewie Gordon* is a tame melody, quite unsuited for such a heroic outburst. Besides, the necessity of inserting expletive syllables in each verse to make it suit that air, is insufferable. Mr Thomson carried his point against the better sense of Burns for the time; but the public in a few years reversed the judgment, and *Hey, tuttie taitie* was united to the song for ever.

## BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

Sept. 179.

I HAVE received your list, my dear sir, and here go my observations on it.<sup>1</sup>

*Down the Burn, Davie*—I have this moment tried an alteration, leaving out the last half of the third stanza, and the first half of the last stanza; thus :

As down the burn they took their way,  
And through the flowery dale ;  
His cheek to hers he aft did lay,  
And love was aye the tale.

With ‘ Mary, when shall we return,  
Sic pleasure to renew ? ’  
Quoth Mary : ‘ Love, I like the burn,  
And aye shall follow you.’<sup>2</sup>

*Through the Wood, Laddie*—I am decidedly of opinion that both in this, and *There'll never be Peace till Jamie comes Hame*, the second or high part of the tune being a repetition of the first part an octave higher, is only for instrumental music, and would be much better omitted in singing.

*Cowden-knowes*—Remember in your index, that the song in pure English to this tune, beginning—

‘ When summer comes, the swains on Tweed,’

is the production of Crawford. Robert was his Christian name.

*Laddie, lie near me*, must lie by me for some time. I do not know the air ; and until I am complete master of a tune, in my own singing (such as it is), I can never compose for it. My way is : I consider the poetic sentiment correspondent to my idea of the musical expression ; then choose my theme ; begin one stanza : when that is composed, which is generally the most difficult part of the business, I walk out, sit down now and then, look out for objects in nature around me that are in unison and harmony with the cogitations of my fancy, and workings of my bosom ; humming every now and then the air with the verses I have framed. When I feel my Muse beginning to jade, I retire to the solitary fireside of my study, and there commit my effusions to paper ; swinging at intervals on the

<sup>1</sup> Mr Thomson's list of songs for his publication. In his remarks, the bard proceeds in order, and goes through the whole ; but on many of them he merely signifies his approbation. All his remarks of any importance are presented to the reader.—CURRIE.

<sup>2</sup> This alteration Mr Thomson has adopted (or at least intended to adopt), instead of the last stanza of the original song, which is objectionable in point of delicacy.—CURRIE.

hind-legs of my elbow-chair, by way of calling forth my own critical strictures as my pen goes on. Seriously, this, at home, is almost invariably my way.

What cursed egotism !

*Gill Morice* I am for leaving out. It is a plaguy length ; the air itself is never sung ; and its place can well be supplied by one or two songs for fine airs that are not in your list—for instance, *Craigieburn Wood* and *Roy's Wife*. The first, beside its intrinsic merit, has novelty ; and the last has high merit, as well as great celebrity. I have the original words of a song for the last air, in the handwriting of the lady who composed it ; and they are superior to any edition of the song which the public has yet seen.

*Highland Laddie*—The old set will please a mere Scotch ear best ; and the new an Italianised one. There is a third, and what Oswald calls the old *Highland Laddie*, which pleases me more than either of them. It is sometimes called *Ginglin Johnnie* ; it being the air of an old humorous tawdry song of that name. You will find it in the Museum, *I hae been at Crookieden*, &c. I would advise you, in this musical quandary, to offer up your prayers to the Muses for inspiring direction ; and in the meantime, waiting for this direction, bestow a libation to Bacchus ; and there is not a doubt but you will hit on a judicious choice. *Probatum est.*

*Auld Sir Simon* I must beg you to leave out, and put in its place *The Quaker's Wife*.

*Blithe hae I been o'er the Hill*, is one of the finest songs ever I made in my life, and, besides, is composed on a young lady, positively the most beautiful, lovely woman in the world. As I purpose giving you the names and designations of all my heroines, to appear in some future edition of your work, perhaps half a century hence, you must certainly include *The bonniest Lass in a' the Warld* in your collection.

*Dainty Davie* I have heard sung nineteen thousand, nine hundred, and ninety-nine times, and always with the chorus to the low part of the tune ; and nothing has surprised me so much as your opinion on this subject. If it will not suit as I proposed, we will lay two of the stanzas together, and then make the chorus follow.

*Fee him, Father*—I enclose you Fraser's set of this tune when he plays it slow : in fact, he makes it the language of despair. I shall here give you two stanzas, in that style, merely to try if it will be any improvement. Were it possible, in singing, to give it half the pathos which Fraser gives it in playing, it would make an admirably pathetic song.<sup>1</sup> I do not give these verses for any merit they have. I composed them at the time in which ‘ Patie Allan's mither died—that was, about the back o' midnight,’ and by the lee-side of a bowl of punch, which had overset every mortal in company except the hautbois and the Muse.

<sup>1</sup> I well recollect, about the year 1824, hearing Fraser play *Fee him, father*, on his benefit night, in the Edinburgh theatre, ‘in the manner in which he had played it to Burns.’ It was listened to with breathless attention, as if the house had felt it to be a medium of communion with the spirit of the departed bard.

## THOU HAST LEFT ME EVER.

TUNE—*Fee him, Father.*

Thou hast left me ever, Jamie ! thou hast left me ever ;  
 Thou hast left me ever, Jamie ! thou hast left me ever :  
 Aften hast thou vowed that death only should us sever ;  
 Now thou'st left thy lass for aye—I maun see thee never, Jamie,  
 I'll see thee never.

Thou hast me forsaken, Jamie ! thou hast me forsaken ;  
 Thou hast me forsaken, Jamie ! thou hast me forsaken :  
 Thou canst love anither jo, while my heart is breaking ;  
 Soon my weary een I'll close—never mair to waken, Jamie,  
 Ne'er mair to waken !<sup>1</sup>

*Jockie and Jenny* I would discard, and in its place would put *There's nae Luck about the House*, which has a very pleasant air, and which is positively the finest love-ballad in that style in the Scottish, or perhaps in any other language. *When she came ben she bobbit*, as an air, is more beautiful than either, and in the *andante* way would unite with a charming sentimental ballad.

*Saw ye my Father?* is one of my greatest favourites. The evening before last, I wandered out, and began a tender song, in what I think is its native style. I must premise, that the old way, and the way to give most effect, is to have no starting-note, as the fiddlers call it, but to burst at once into the pathos. Every country girl sings *Saw ye my Father?* &c.

My song is but just begun; and I should like, before I proceed, to know your opinion of it. I have sprinkled it with the Scottish dialect, but it may be easily turned into correct English.

## FRAGMENT.

TUNE—*Saw ye my Father?*

Where are the joys I hae met in the morning,  
 That danced to the lark's early sang ?  
 Where is the peace that awaited my wandering,  
 At e'enin' the wild woods amang ?

Nae mair a-winding the course o' yon river,  
 And marking sweet flowerets sae fair ;  
 Nae mair I trace the light footsteps o' pleasure,  
 But sorrow and sad sighing care.

<sup>1</sup> It is surprising that Burns should have thought it necessary to substitute new verses for the old song to this air, which is one of the most exquisite effusions of genuine natural sentiment in the whole range of Scottish lyrical poetry. Its merit is now fully appreciated, while Burns's substitute song is scarcely ever sung.

Is it that simmer's forsaken our valleys,  
And grim, surly winter is near?  
No, no ! the bees humming round the gay roses  
Proclaim it the pride o' the year.

Fain wad I hide what I fear to discover,  
Yet lang, lang too well I hae known ;  
A' that has causèd the wreck in my bosom  
Is Jenny, fair Jenny, alone.<sup>1</sup>

*Todlin Hame.*—Urbani mentioned an idea of his, which has long been mine, that this air is highly susceptible of pathos: accordingly, you will soon hear him at your concert try it to a song of mine in the *Museum, Ye Banks and Braes o' bonnie Doon*. One song more, and I have done: *Auld Lang Syne*. The air is but mediocre; but the following song, the old song of the olden times, and which has never been in print, nor even in manuscript, until I took it down from an old man's singing, is enough to recommend any air:—

#### AULD LANG SYNE.

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
And never brought to mind ?  
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
And days o' lang syne ?

#### CHORUS.

For auld lang syne, my dear,  
For auld lang syne,  
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,  
For auld lang syne !

We twa hae run about the braes,  
And pu'd the gowans fine ;  
But we've wandered mony a weary foot,  
Sin' auld lang syne.

We twa hae paidl't i' the burn,  
Frae mornin' sun till dine ;  
But seas between us braid hae roared,  
Sin' auld lang syne.

And here's a hand, my trusty fiere,  
And gie's a hand o' thine ;  
And we'll tak a right guid willie-waught,  
For auld lang syne.

And surely ye'll be your pint-stoup,  
And surely I'll be mine ;  
And we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet  
For auld lang syne.

<sup>1</sup> In this case also, the old song, though objectionable in subject, has kept its ground against Burns's effort to supplant it.

Now, I suppose, I have tired your patience fairly. You must, after all is over, have a number of ballads, properly so called. *Gill Morice, Tranent Muir, Macpherson's Farewell, Battle of Sheriffmuir, or, We ran and they ran* (I know the author of this charming ballad, and his history), *Hardiknute, Barbara Allan* (I can furnish a finer set of this tune than any that has yet appeared); and besides, do you know that I really have the old tune to which *The Cherry and the Slae* was sung, and which is mentioned as a well-known air in *Scotland's Complaint*—a book published before poor Mary's days?<sup>1</sup> It was then called, *The Banks o' Helicon*; an old poem, which Pinkerton has brought to light. You will see all this in Tytler's *History of Scottish Music*. The tune, to a learned ear, may have no great merit; but it is a great curiosity. I have a good many original things of this kind.

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## BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

[8th] September 1793.

I AM happy, my dear sir, that my ode pleases you so much. Your idea, ‘honour’s bed,’ is, though a beautiful, a hackneyed idea;<sup>2</sup> so, if you please, we will let the line stand as it is. I have altered the song as follows:—

## BANNOCKBURN.

## ROBERT BRUCE'S ADDRESS TO HIS ARMY.

Scots, wha hae wi’ Wallace bled,  
Scots, wham Bruce has often led;  
Welcome to your gory bed!  
Or to glorious victory!

Now’s the day, and now’s the hour;  
See the front o’ battle lour:  
See approach proud Edward’s power—  
Edward! chains and slavery!

<sup>1</sup> The tune here alluded to by Burns, and which was inserted in the fifth volume of Johnson, in connection with the *Cherry and the Slae*, was obtained by Mr Ritson from Edward Williams, a Welshman, who, it is thought, had probably noted it down from memory. The true air of the *Banks of Helicon*, different from the above, was subsequently discovered in a manuscript now in the Advocates’ Library, and has been printed in Stenhouse’s notes to *Johnson’s Museum*.

<sup>2</sup> From this passage it appears that Mr Thomson, in his letter of the 5th instant, had objected not merely to the word ‘weleome,’ in one of the lines of the ode, but to a word of more importance; or perhaps the objection has altogether been misprinted or transplanted. Many such liberties appear to have been taken by the original editor of this correspondence.

Wha will be a traitor knave?  
 Wha can fill a coward's grave?  
 Wha sae base as be a slave?  
 Traitor! coward! turn, and flee!

Wha for Scotland's king and law  
 Freedom's sword will strongly draw  
 Freeinan stand, or freeman fa',  
 Sodger! hero! on wi' me!

By oppression's woes and pains!  
 By your sons in servile chains!  
 We will drain our dearest veins,  
 But they shall be—shall be free!

Lay the proud usurpers low!  
 Tyrants fall in every foe!  
 Liberty's in every blow!  
 Forward! let us do or die!

*N.B.—I have borrowed the last stanza from the common stall edition of Wallace—*

‘A false usurper sinks in every foe,  
 And liberty returns with every blow.’

A couplet worthy of Homer. Yesterday, you had enough of my correspondence. The post goes, and my head aches miserably. One comfort! I suffer so much just now in this world, for last night's joviality, that I shall escape scot-free for it in the world to come. Amen!

#### MR THOMSON TO BURNS.

12th September 1793.

A THOUSAND thanks to you, my dear sir, for your observations on the list of my songs. I am happy to find your ideas so much in unison with my own, respecting the generality of the airs, as well as the verses. About some of them we differ, but there is no disputing about hobby-horses. I shall not fail to profit by the remarks you make, and to reconsider the whole with attention.

*Dainty Davie* must be sung two stanzas together, and then the chorus; 'tis the proper way. I agree with you, that there may be something of pathos, or tenderness at least, in the air of *Fee him, Father*, when performed with feeling; but a tender cast may be given almost to any lively air, if you sing it very slowly, expressively, and with serious words. I am, however, clearly and invariably for retaining the cheerful tunes joined to their own humorous verses,

wherever the verses are passable. But the sweet song for *Fee him, Father*, which you began about the back of midnight, I will publish as an additional one. Mr James Balfour, the king of good-fellows, and the best singer of the lively Scottish ballads that ever existed, has charmed thousands of companies with *Fee him, Father*, and with *Todlin Hame* also, to the old words, which never should be disunited from either of these airs.<sup>1</sup> Some bacchanals I would wish to discard. *Fy! let's a' to the Bridal*, for instance, is so coarse and vulgar, that I think it fit only to be sung in a company of drunken colliers; and *Saw ye my Father?* appears to me both indelicate and silly.

One word more with regard to your heroic ode. I think, with great deference to the poet, that a prudent general would avoid saying anything to his soldiers which might tend to make death more frightful than it is. 'Gory' presents a disagreeable image to the mind; and to tell them, 'Welcome to your gory bed,' seems rather a discouraging address, notwithstanding the alternative which follows. I have shewn the song to three friends of excellent taste, and each of them objected to this line, which emboldens me to use the freedom of bringing it again under your notice. I would suggest—

Now prepare for honour's bed,  
Or for glorious victory!

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#### BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

[15th] September 1793.

'Who shall decide when doctors disagree?' My ode pleases me so much, that I cannot alter it. Your proposed alterations would, in my opinion, make it tame. I am exceedingly obliged to you for putting me on reconsidering it, as I think I have much improved it. Instead of 'sodger! hero!' I will have it 'Caledonian! on wi' me!'

I have scrutinised it over and over; and to the world, some way or other, it shall go as it is. At the same time, it will not in the least hurt me, should you leave it out altogether, and adhere to your first intention of adopting Logan's verses.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See an account of Mr Balfour in the editor's *Traditions of Edinburgh*.

<sup>2</sup> The reader will have observed, that Burns adopted the alterations proposed by his friend and correspondent in former instances, with great readiness; perhaps, indeed, on all indifferent occasions. In the present instance, however, he rejected them, though repeatedly urged with determined resolution. With every respect for the judgment of Mr Thomson and his friends, we may be satisfied that he did so. He who, in preparing for an engagement, attempts to withdraw his imagination from images of death, will probably have but imperfect success, and is not fitted to stand in the ranks of battle, where the liberties of a kingdom are at issue. Of such men, the conquerors of Bannockburn were not composed. Bruce's troops were inured to war, and familiar with all its sufferings and dangers. On the eve of that memorable day, their spirits were, without doubt, wound up to a pitch of enthusiasm suited to the occasion; a pitch of enthusiasm, at which danger becomes attractive, and the most terrific forms of death are no longer terrible. Such a strain of sentiment this heroic "welcome" may be supposed well calculated to elevate—to raise their hearts high above fear, and to nerve their arms to the utmost pitch of mortal

I have finished my song to *Saw ye my Father?* and in English, as you will see. That there is a syllable too much for the expression of the air, is true; but, allow me to say, that the mere dividing of a dotted crotchet into a crotchet and a quaver, is not a great matter: however, in that I have no pretensions to cope in judgment with you. Of the poetry, I speak with confidence; but the music is a business where I hint my ideas with the utmost diffidence.

The old verses have merit, though unequal, and are popular. My advice is to set the air to the old words, and let mine follow as English verses. Here they are:—

### WHERE ARE THE JOYS?

TUNE—*Saw ye my Father?*

Where are the joys I have met in the morning,  
That danced to the lark's early song?  
Where is the peace that awaited my wandering,  
At evening the wild-woods among?

No more a-winding the course of yon river,  
And marking sweet flowerets so fair;  
No more I trace the light footsteps of pleasure,  
But sorrow and sad sighing care.

Is it that summer's forsaken our valleys,  
And grim, surly winter is near?  
No, no! the bees humming round the gay roses,  
Proclaim it the pride of the year.

Fain would I hide what I fear to discover,  
Yet long, long too well have I known,  
All that has caused this wreck in my bosom  
Is Jenny, fair Jenny alone.

exertion. These observations might be illustrated and supported by a reference to the martial poetry of all nations, from the spirit-stirring strains of Tyrtæus, to the war-song of General Wolfe. Mr Thomson's observation, that “‘Welcome to your gory bed’ is a discouraging address,” seems not sufficiently considered. Perhaps, indeed, it may be admitted, that the term *gory* is somewhat objectionable, not on account of its presenting a frightful but a disagreeable image to the mind. But a great poet, uttering his conceptions on an interesting occasion, seeks always to present a picture that is vivid, and is uniformly disposed to sacrifice the delicacies of taste on the altar of the imagination. And it is the privilege of superior genius, by producing a new association, to elevate expressions that were originally low, and thus to triumph over the deficiencies of language. In how many instances might this be exemplified from the works of our immortal Shakespeare!—

“Who would *fardels* bear,  
To groan and *sweat* under a weary life—  
When he himself might his *quietus* make  
With a *bare bodkin*? ”

It were easy to enlarge, but to suggest such reflections is probably sufficient.—  
CURRIE.

Time cannot aid me, my griefs are immortal,  
 Not<sup>1</sup> hope dare a comfort bestow :  
 Come, then, enamoured and fond of my anguish,  
 Enjoyment I'll seek in my wo.

Adieu, my dear sir! the post goes, so I shall defer some other remarks until more leisure.

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## BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

September 1793.

I HAVE been turning over some volumes of songs, to find verses whose measures would suit the airs for which you have allotted me to find English songs.

[The poet here transcribed a piece of his own, not sufficiently decorous for publication, besides a number of pieces from old song-books, in a few instances touched up and improved by himself.]

For *Muirland Willie*, you have, in Ramsay's *Tea-table*, an excellent song, beginning, *Ah, why those Tears in Nelly's eyes?* As for *The Collier's Dochter*, take the following old bacchanal :—

## DELUDED SWAIN, THE PLEASURE.

TUNE—*The Collier's Bonnie Lassie.*

Deluded swain, the pleasure  
 The fickle Fair can give thee,  
 Is but a fairy treasure—  
 Thy hopes will soon deceive thee.  
 The billows on the ocean,  
 The breezes idly roaming,  
 The clouds' uncertain motion—  
 They are but types of woman.  
 Oh ! art thou not ashamed  
 To dote upon a feature ?  
 If man thou wouldest be named,  
 Despise the silly creature.  
 Go, find an honest fellow ;  
 Good claret set before thee :  
 Hold on till thou art mellow,  
 And then to bed in glory.

The faulty line in *Logan Water* I mend thus :

How can your flinty hearts enjoy  
 The widow's tears, the orphan's cry ?

The song otherwise will pass. As to *M'Gregoria Rua-Ruth*, you

<sup>1</sup> So in manuscript—hitherto always printed *Nor.*

will see a song of mine to it, with a set of the air superior to yours, in the *Museum*, vol. ii. p. 181. The song begins,

‘ Raving winds around her blowing.’

Your Irish airs are pretty, but they are downright Irish. If they were like the *Banks of Banna*, for instance, though really Irish, yet in the Scottish taste, you might adopt them. Since you are so fond of Irish music, what say you to twenty-five of them in an additional number? We could easily find this quantity of charming airs: I will take care that you shall not want songs; and I assure you, that you would find it the most saleable of the whole. If you do not approve of *Roy's Wife*, for the music's sake, we shall not insert it. *Deil tak the Wars* is a charming song; so is *Saw ye my Peggy?* *There's nae Luck about the House* well deserves a place. I cannot say that *O'er the Hills and far awa* strikes me as equal to your selection. *This is no my ain House* is a great favourite air of mine; and if you will send me your set of it, I will task my Muse to her highest effort. What is your opinion of *I hae laid a Herrin' in saut?* I like it much. Your Jacobite airs are pretty, and there are many others of the same kind pretty; but you have not room for them. You cannot, I think, insert *Fy! let's a' to the Bridal* to any other words than its own.

What pleases me, as simple and *naïve*, disgusts you as ludicrous and low. For this reason, *Fy! gie me my Coggie, Sirs;* *Fy! let's a' to the Bridal*, with several others of that cast, are to me highly pleasing; while, *Saw ye my Father, or saw ye my Mother?* delights me with its descriptive simple pathos. Thus my song, *Ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten?* pleases myself so much, that I cannot try my hand at another song to the air; so I shall not attempt it. I know you will laugh at all this; but ‘ ilka man wears his belt his ain gait.’

A public library had been established by subscription among the citizens of Dumfries in September 1792, and Burns, ever eager about books, had been from the first one of its supporters. Before it was a week old, he had presented to it a copy of his poems. He does not seem to have been a regularly admitted member till 5th March 1793, when ‘ the committee, by a great majority, resolved to offer to Mr Robert Burns a share in the library, free of any admission-money [10s. 6d.] and the quarterly contributions [2s. 6d.] to this date, out of respect and esteem for his abilities as a literary man; and they directed the secretary to make this known to Mr Burns as soon as possible, that the application which they understood he was about to make in the ordinary way might be anticipated.’ This is a pleasing testimony to Burns as a poet, but still more so to Burns as a citizen and member of society. His name appears in September as a member of committee—an honour assigned by vote of the members.

On the 30th of this month, the liberal poet bestowed four books

upon the library—namely, *Humphry Clinker*, *Julia de Roubigné*, *Knox's History of the Reformation*, and *Delolme on the British Constitution*. The present intelligent librarian, Mr M'Robert, reports, respecting the last-mentioned work, a curious anecdote, which he learned directly from the late Provost Thomson of Dumfries. Early in the morning after Delolme had been presented, Burns came to Mr Thomson's bedside before he was up, anxiously desiring to see the volume, as he feared he had written something upon it 'which might bring him into trouble.' On the volume being shewn to him, he looked at the inscription which he had written upon it the previous night, and, having procured some paste, he pasted over it the fly-leaf in such a way as completely to conceal it.

The gentleman who has been good enough to communicate these particulars, adds:—'I have seen the volume, which is the edition of 1790, neatly bound, with a portrait of the author at the beginning. Some stains of ink shine through the paper, indicating that there is something written on the back of the engraving; but the fly-leaf being pasted down upon it, there is nothing legible. On holding the leaf up to the light, however, I distinctly read, in the undoubted manuscript of the poet, the following words :—

"Mr Burns presents this book to the Library, and begs they will take it as a creed of British liberty — until they find a better.

R. B."

'The words, "until they find a better," are evidently those which the poet feared "might bring him into trouble." Probably, if the inscription had not been written on the back of the engraving, he might have removed it altogether: at all events, his anxiety to conceal it shews what trivial circumstances were in those days sufficient to constitute a political offence.' Ay, and to think of this happening in the same month with the writing of *Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled!* !

Fully to appreciate the feelings of alarm under which Burns acted on this occasion, it must be kept in view that the trial of Mr Thomas Muir for sedition had taken place on the 30th of August, when, in the evidence against him, appeared that of his servant, Ann Fisher, to the effect that he had purchased and distributed certain copies of Paine's *Rights of Man*. The stress laid upon that testimony by the crown-counsel had excited much remark. It might well appear to a government officer like Burns, that his own conduct at such a crisis ought to be in the highest degree circumspect. We do not know exactly the time when the incident which we are about to relate took place, but it appears likely to have been nearly that of Muir's trial. Our poet one day

called upon his quondam neighbour, George Haugh, the blacksmith, and, handing him a copy of Paine's *Common Sense* and *Rights of Man*, desired him to keep these books for him, as, if they were found in his own house, he should be a ruined man. Haugh readily accepted the trust, and the books remained in possession of his family down to a recent period.

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## BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

[29th] October 1793.

YOUR last letter, my dear Thomson, was indeed laden with heavy news. Alas, poor Erskine!<sup>1</sup> The recollection that he was a coadjutor in your publication, has till now scared me from writing to you, or turning my thoughts on composing for you.

I am pleased that you are reconciled to the air of the *Quaker's Wife*, though, by the by, an old Highland gentleman, and a deep antiquarian, tells me it is a Gaelic air, and known by the name of *Leiger m' choss*. The following verses, I hope, will please you, as an English song to the air.

[The poet here transcribed his song, beginning *Thine I am, my faithful Fair*, already printed in volume iii. p. 106.]

Your objection to the English song I proposed for *John Anderson, my jo*, is certainly just. The following is by an old acquaintance of mine, and I think has merit. The song was never in print, which I think is so much in your favour. The more original good poetry your collection contains, it certainly has so much the more merit:—

## SONG.—BY GAVIN TURNBULL.

O condescend, dear charming maid,  
My wretched state to view;  
A tender swain to love betrayed,  
And sad despair, by you.

While here, all melancholy,  
My passion I deplore,  
Yet, urged by stern, resistless fate,  
I love thee more and more.

I heard of love, and with disdain  
The urchin's power denied;  
I laughed at every lover's pain,  
And mocked them when they sighed.

<sup>1</sup> The Honourable A. Erskine, whose melancholy death Mr Thomson had communicated in an excellent letter, which he has suppressed.—CURRIE. Mr Erskine was found drowned in the Firth of Forth, with his pockets full of stones. The distressing event was believed to have been the consequence of a habit of gambling.

But how my state is altered !  
 Those happy days are o'er ;  
 For all thy unrelenting hate,  
     I love thee more and more.

O yield, illustrious beauty, yield !  
 No longer let me mourn ;  
 And though victorious in the field,  
     Thy captive do not scorn.

Let generous pity warm thee,  
 My wonted peace restore ;  
 And, grateful, I shall bless thee still,  
     And love thee more and more.

The following address of Turnbull's to the Nightingale, will suit as an English song to the air, *There was a Lass, and she was Fair*. By the by, Turnbull has a great many songs in MS. which I can command, if you like his manner. Possibly, as he is an old friend of mine, I may be prejudiced in his favour; but I like some of his pieces very much.

## THE NIGHTINGALE.

Thou sweetest minstrel of the grove,  
 That ever tried the plaintive strain,  
 Awake thy tender tale of love,  
     And soothe a poor forsaken swain.

For though the Muses deign to aid,  
 And teach him smoothly to complain ;  
 Yet Delia, charming, cruel maid,  
     Is deaf to her forsaken swain.

All day, with fashion's gaudy sons,  
 In sport she wanders o'er the plain :  
 Their tales approve, and still she shuns  
     The notes of her forsaken swain.

When evening shades obscure the sky,  
 And bring the solemn hours again,  
 Begin, sweet bird, thy melody,  
     And soothe a poor forsaken swain.

I shall just transcribe another of Turnbull's, which would go charmingly to *Lewie Gordon*.

## LAURA.

Let me wander where I will,  
 By shady wood, or winding rill ;  
 Where the sweetest May-born flowers  
 Paint the meadows, deck the bowers ;  
 Where the linnet's early song  
 Echoes sweet the woods among :  
 Let me wander where I will,  
 Laura haunts my fancy still.

If at rosy dawn I choose  
 To indulge the smiling muse ;  
 If I court some cool retreat,  
 To avoid the noontide heat ;  
 If beneath the moon's pale ray,  
 Through unfrequented wilds I stray :  
 Let me wander where I will,  
 Laura haunts my fancy still.

When at night the drowsy god  
 Waves his sleep-compelling rod,  
 And to fancy's wakeful eyes  
 Bids celestial visions rise ;  
 While with boundless joy I rove  
 Through the fairy land of love :  
 Let me wander where I will,  
 Laura haunts my fancy still.

The rest of your letter I shall answer at some other opportunity.

Gavin Turnbull was the author of a now forgotten volume, published at Glasgow in 1788, under the title of *Poetical Essays*. Burns's overestimate of his merits must be obvious from the pieces selected. Our bard had in this respect a resemblance to Sir Walter Scott, so remarkable for the generosity of his judgments on the works of his friends.

#### IMPROPTU

ON MRS RIDDEL'S BIRTHDAY, 4TH NOVEMBER 1793.

Old Winter, with his frosty beard,  
 Thus once to Jove his prayer preferred :  
 ‘ What have I done of all the year,  
 To bear this hated doom severe ?  
 My cheerless suns no pleasure know ;  
 Night’s horrid car drags, dreary slow ;  
 My dismal months no joys are crowning,  
 But spleeny English, hanging, drowning. ■

‘ Now, Jove, for once be mighty civil,  
 To counterbalance all this evil ;  
 Give me, and I’ve no more to say,  
 Give me Maria’s natal-day !  
 That brilliant gift shall so enrich me,  
 Spring, summer, autumn, cannot match me.’  
 ‘ Tis done !’ says Jove ; so ends my story,  
 And Winter once rejoiced in glory.

Though we have not many professed impromptus of Burns, it is certain that he shewed a remarkable readiness in producing

such trifles. His surviving companions could relate many instances of his giving forth epigrams and (what was a favourite form of verse with him) epitaphs upon individuals, as well as graces before and after meat, almost instantaneously after being requested to do so. It seemed to them something like a miracle. Most of the versicles published under these names were produced in this unpremeditated manner, and with no design beyond the raising of a laugh for the moment. It is scarcely just, therefore, to criticise them as a department of his works. Many others, we are assured, have been forgotten, or rest only in the memory of a few of those few who remain to describe Burns from personal knowledge.

As an example of his ready powers of versification: A Mr Ladymen, an English commercial traveller, alighting one day at Brownhill Inn, in Dumfriesshire, found that he should have to dine with a company in which was Robert Burns. The dinner, at which the landlord, Bacon, presided, passed off well, the principal dish being the well-known namesake of the host, who, it may be remarked, appeared to be looked on as something of a superfluity at his own table. The man had retired for a few minutes to see after a fresh supply of toddy, when some one called upon Burns to give the young Englishman some proof of his being really Burns the poet, by composing some verses on the spur of the moment; and it was with hardly an interval for reflection that the bard pronounced as follows:—

At Brownhill we always get dainty good cheer,  
And plenty of bacon each day in the year;  
We've all things that's nice, and mostly in season,  
But why always *Bacon*—come, give me a reason?<sup>1</sup>

Another instance: Nicol and Masterton had come to spend a week of their vacation at Dumfries, for the purpose of enjoying the society of their friend Burns. The scene of the *Peck o' Maut* was renewed every evening in the Globe Tavern. Excepting, indeed, that Burns attended to his duty in the forenoon, and that Willie and Allan took a rattling walk before dinner, to give them-

<sup>1</sup> From Mr Ladyman's own report of the incident, in 1824.

'At the sale of the effects of Mr Bacon, Brownhill Inn, after his death in 1825, his snuff-box, being found to bear the inscription—

ROBT. BURNS,  
OFFICER  
OF  
THE EXCISE

—although only a horn plainly mounted with silver, brought £.5. It was understood to have been presented by Burns to Bacon, with whom he had spent many a merry night.'—*Ayrshire Monthly News-Letter*, April 5, 1844.

selves an appetite, it might be said that the week was one entire and perfect chrysolite of merry-making. One day, when they were to dine at the Globe, they found, on coming in at three, that no dinner had been ordered. As Burns had taken on himself this duty, the fault was his, and the other two gentlemen were wroth with him accordingly. ‘Just like him,’ quoth Mrs Hyslop: ‘ye might hae kent that *he’s ne’er to lippen to.*’ ‘Well, but can we have anything to eat? You know we must dine somehow.’ Mrs Hyslop, or as Burns called her, Meg, proved propitious. There was a tup’s-head in the pot for John and herself; and, if they pleased, they might have the first of it.

Now a good tup’s-head, with the accompanying trotters—seeing that, in the Scottish cuisine, nothing is taken off but the wool—is a dish which will amply satisfy six, or even eight persons;<sup>1</sup> so it was no contemptible resource for the hungry trio. When it had been disposed on the board, ‘Burns,’ said Nicol, ‘we fine you for your neglect of arrangements: you give us something new as a grace.’ Our poet *instantly*, with appropriate gesture and tone, said:

O Lord, when hunger pinches sore,  
Do thou stand us in need,  
And send us from thy bounteous store,  
A tup or wether head! Amen.

They fell to and enjoyed their fare prodigiously, leaving, however, a miraculously ample sufficiency for the host and hostess. ‘Now, Burns, we’ve not done with you. We fine you again. Return thanks.’ He as promptly said:

O Lord, since we have feasted thus,  
Which we so little merit,  
Send Meg to take away the flesh,  
And Jock to bring the spirit! Amen.<sup>2</sup>

#### MR THOMSON TO BURNS.

7th November 1793.

MY GOOD SIR—After so long a silence, it gave me peculiar pleasure to recognise your well-known hand, for I had begun to be apprehensive that all was not well with you. I am happy to find, however, that your silence did not proceed from that cause, and that you have got among the ballads once more.

<sup>1</sup> The editor begs to say, that he here speaks with due caution: he has been one of a party of eight persons who dined heartily on a tup’s-head with its accompanying broth.

<sup>2</sup> From a gentleman who was intimate with Burns at that time.

I have to thank you for your English song to *Leiger m' choss*, which I think extremely good, although the colouring is warm. Your friend Mr Turnbull's songs have doubtless considerable merit; and as you have the command of his manuscripts, I hope you may find out some that will answer as English songs, to the airs yet unprovided.

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## BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

December 1793.

TELL me how you like the following verses to the tune of *My Jo Janet?*—

## MY SPOUSE NANCY.

TUNE—*My Jo Janet.*

‘Husband, husband, cease your strife,  
Nor longer idly rave, sir;  
Though I am your wedded wife,  
Yet I am not your slave, sir?’

‘One of two must still obey,  
Nancy, Nancy;  
Is it man, or woman, say,  
My spouse, Nancy?’

‘If ’tis still the lordly word,  
Service and obedience;  
I’ll desert my sovereign lord,  
And so good-by allegiance!’

‘Sad will I be, so bereft,  
Nancy, Nancy;  
Yet I’ll try to make a shift,  
My spouse, Nancy.’

‘My poor heart then break it must,  
My last hour I’m near it:  
When you lay me in the dust,  
Think, think how you will bear it?’

‘I will hope and trust in Heaven,  
Nancy, Nancy;  
Strength to bear it will be given,  
My spouse, Nancy.’

‘Well, sir, from the silent dead,  
Still I’ll try to daunt you;  
Ever round your midnight bed  
Horrid sprites shall haunt you.’

'I'll wed another like my dear,  
 Nancy, Nancy;  
 Then all hell will fly for fear,  
 My spouse, Nancy.'<sup>1</sup>

TO JOHN M'MURDO, ESQ.

DUMFRIES, December 1793.

SIR—It is said that we take the greatest liberties with our greatest friends, and I pay myself a very high compliment in the manner in which I am going to apply the remark. I have owed you money longer than ever I owed it to any man. Here is Ker's account, and here are six guineas ; and now, I don't owe a shilling to man—or woman either. But for these d—— dirty, dog-eared little pages, I had done myself the honour to have waited on you long ago. Independent of the obligations your hospitality has laid me under, the consciousness of your superiority in the rank of man and gentleman, of itself was fully as much as I could ever make head against; but to owe you money, too, was more than I could face.

I think I once mentioned something of a collection of Scots songs I have for some years been making—I send you a perusal of what I have got together. I could not conveniently spare them above five or six days, and five or six glances of them will probably more than suffice you. A very few of them are my own. When you are tired of them, please leave them with Mr Clint, of the King's Arms. There is not another copy of the collection in the world; and I should be sorry that any unfortunate negligence should deprive me of what has cost me a good deal of pains.

R. B.

It seems far from unlikely that Mr M'Murdo was the friend to whom Burns applied for the loan of a few guineas in summer, and that, having discharged an account of Mr Ker against that gentleman, he was now clearing off the balance of the debt by the enclosure spoken of.

From an early period of his career, Burns had begun to dabble in verse conceived in a strain of licentious humour. Into this taste he was led by his enthusiastic love of all the forms of his country's elder muse. With a strange contradiction to the grave and religious character of the Scottish people, they possessed a wonderful quantity of indecorous traditional verse—not of an inflammatory character, but simply expressive of a profound sense

<sup>1</sup> Dr Currie here added the song, *Wilt thou be my Dearie?* It does not appear in the original manuscript. The reader will find it afterwards in a different connection.

of the ludicrous in connection with the sexual affections.<sup>1</sup> Such things, usually kept from public view, oozed out in merry companies such as Burns loved to frequent. Men laughed at them for the moment, and, in the sober daylight of next morning, had forgotten them. When our poet was particularly struck by any free-spoken ditty of the old school, he would scribble it down, and transfer it to a commonplace-book. In time, what he thus collected, he was led to imitate, apparently for no other object than that of amusing such rough good-fellows as himself in their moments of conviviality. We see that, in establishing his commonplace-book in spring 1787, he designed to commit to it a few of his compositions of this class. He afterwards repeated copies of them, which he would, with his usual heedlessness, allow to pass into the hands of his friends. We now see from the above letter to Mr M'Murdo, that he had at length transcribed them into a volume, which he would occasionally intrust to the keeping of a friend. These facts have been the cause of much reproach to Burns; and I do not say that his conduct was excusable. I am, nevertheless, convinced that it originated mainly in nothing worse than his strong sense of the ludicrous. Of this, I venture to say, there could be no doubt entertained by the public, if it were allowable to bring the proper evidence into court. It is also to be admitted that, to heighten the effect, he was too apt to bring in a dash of levity respecting Scriptural characters and incidents—a kind of bad taste, however, which was likewise exemplified to his hand by the common conversation of his countrymen; for certain it is, that the piety of the old Scotch people did not exclude a very considerable share of what may be called an unconscious profanity. There is a jocular ballad of Burns, of the kind described, which he exhibited to his friends as if designed for the press, with a prose note from the publisher: ‘ Courteous Reader—The following is certainly the production of one of those licentious ungodly (too much abounding in this our day) wretches, who take it as a compliment to be called wicked, provided you allow them to be witty. Pity it is, that while so many tar-barrels in the country are empty, and so many gibbets untenanted, some example is not made of

<sup>1</sup> ‘ In Britain, and particularly in reading Scotland, you know that the library of the peasant is composed chiefly of such coarse fictions as the *Exploits of George Buchanan*, the histories of *John Cheap the Chapman*, *Leper the Tailor*, *Lothian Tom*, *Paddy from Cork*, the *Creelman's Courtship*, *Simple John and his Twelve Misfortunes*, and such like; all of them saturated with indecency, and forming a library of facetiae, which, in spite of the eant of the day about the moral and religious character of the country, prove how much the national humour and peculiarities of the people have been and still are imbued with coarseness and indelicacy.

‘ In Prussia, I am inclined to think that the vulgar taste is different; at least if the selection which I made be taken as a criterion. It is clear that there is far less love of the prurient and coarsely humorous about the German people, than among either the French or the British.’—*Strang's Germany in 1831*. 2 vols. 1836.

these profligates.' Unluckily, Burns's collection of these facetiae, including his own essays in the same walk, fell after his death into the hands of one of those publishers who would sacrifice the highest interests of humanity to put an additional penny into their own purses; and, to the lasting grief of all the friends of our poet, they were allowed the honours of the press. The mean-looking volume which resulted should be a warning to all honourable men of letters against the slightest connection with clandestine literature, much more the degradation of contributing to it. It may also serve as a curious study to those who take a delight in estimating the possible varieties of intellectual mood and of moral sensation of which our nature is capable.

With his usual anxiety to communicate his new compositions to his friends, Burns sent copies of *Bruce's Address* to various gentlemen of the liberal complexion of politics, whom he thought likely to be pleased with such an effusion at such a crisis. The three following letters were all employed as enclosures of copies of that poem:—

TO CAPTAIN ——.<sup>1</sup>

DUMFRIES, 5th December 1793.

SIR — Heated as I was with wine yesternight, I was perhaps rather seemingly impertinent in my anxious wish to be honoured with your acquaintance. You will forgive it—it was the impulse of heartfelt respect. 'He is the father of the Scottish county reform, and is a man who does honour to the business, at the same time that the business does honour to him,' said my worthy friend Glenriddel to somebody by me, who was talking of your coming to this country with your corps. 'Then,' I said, 'I have a woman's longing to take him by the hand, and say to him: "Sir, I honour you as a man to whom the interests of humanity are dear, and as a patriot to whom the rights of your country are sacred."'

In times like these, sir, when our commoners are barely able, by the glimmering of their own twilight understandings, to scrawl a frank, and when lords are what gentlemen would be ashamed to be, to whom shall a sinking country call for help? To the independent country gentleman. To him who has too deep a stake in his country not to be in earnest for her welfare; and who, in the honest pride of man, can view with equal contempt the insolence of office and the allurements of corruption.

I mentioned to you a Scots ode or song I had lately composed, and which, I think, has some merit. Allow me to enclose it. When I fall in with you at the theatre, I shall be glad to have your opinion of it. Accept of it, sir, as a very humble, but most sincere tribute of respect from a man who, dear as he prizes poetic fame, yet holds dearer an independent mind. I have the honour to be, R. B.

<sup>1</sup> Not unlikely, Captain Robertson of Lude.

## TO THE EARL OF BUCHAN.

DUMFRIES, 12th January 1794.

MY LORD—Will your lordship allow me to present you with the enclosed little composition of mine, as a small tribute of gratitude for the acquaintance with which you have been pleased to honour me? Independent of my enthusiasm as a Scotsman, I have rarely met with anything in history which interests my feelings as a man, equal with the story of Bannockburn. On the one hand, a cruel, but able usurper, leading on the finest army in Europe to extinguish the last spark of freedom among a greatly-daring and greatly-injured people; on the other hand, the desperate relics of a gallant nation, devoting themselves to rescue their bleeding country, or perish with her.

Liberty! thou art a prize truly and indeed invaluable, for never canst thou be too dearly bought!

If my little ode has the honour of your lordship's approbation, it will gratify my highest ambition. I have the honour to be, &c.

R. B.

## TO CAPTAIN MILLER, DALSWINTON.

DEAR SIR—The following ode is on a subject which I know you by no means regard with indifference. O Liberty,

'Thou mak'st the gloomy face of nature gay,  
Giv'st beauty to the sun, and pleasure to the day.'

It does me much good to meet with a man whose honest bosom glows with the generous enthusiasm, the heroic daring of liberty, that I could not forbear sending you a composition of my own on the subject, which I really think is in my best manner. I have the honour to be, dear sir, &c.

R. B.

Mrs Riddel had gone to London in the April of 1793, and was many months absent. There, during the gay season, 'I did,' says she, 'so many things that I ought not to have done, and left undone so many things that I ought to have done, that at the expiration of that time, there was no health left in me.' While residing there, she had to part with her husband, suddenly called away to attend to his affairs in the West Indies; and now she lived alone at Woodley Park. To quote her letter to Smellie<sup>1</sup> (November 1793): 'I am as chaste and domestic, but perhaps not quite so industrious, as Penelope in the absence of her hero. I resemble rather the lilies of the field: "I toil not, neither do I

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of William Smellie*, by Robert Kerr, 2 vols. 8vo.

spin ;" but I read, I write, I sing, and contrive to wile away the time as pleasantly as any sociable being like myself can do in a state of solitude, and in some measure of mortification. . . . I shall,' she adds, ' write you more fully in my next, as to the nature of my present pursuits, and how I found Burns and the other friends here you left behind, for they were not few, I assure you.' In such circumstances, she must have of course been unable to indulge in the society of Burns as a visitor of her own. She seems, however, to have desired his company on the occasion of her attending a play at Dumfries.

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## TO MRS RIDDEL.

DEAR MADAM—I meant to have called on you yesternight, but as I edged up to your box-door, the first object which greeted my view was one of those lobster-coated puppies, sitting like another dragon, guarding the Hesperian fruit. On the conditions and capitulations you so obligingly offer, I shall certainly make my weather-beaten rustic phiz a part of your box-furniture on Tuesday, when we may arrange the business of the visit.

Among the profusion of idle compliments which insidious craft or unmeaning folly incessantly offer at your shrine—a shrine, how far exalted above such adoration—permit me, were it but for rarity's sake, to pay you the honest tribute of a warm heart and an independent mind; and to assure you that I am, thou most amiable and most accomplished of thy sex, with the most respectful esteem and fervent regard, thine, &c.

R. B.

A regiment lay at this time in Dumfries, and the officers were, as usual, full of the loyalty of the day. Burns, dissenting from much that was involved in the loyalty, disliked those by whom it was expressed. He also conceived himself to have just reason for believing, that it was in consequence of reports from these gentlemen that his good affection to the government had been called in question by the Board of Excise. Mrs Basil Montagu, who, as Miss Benson, was now visiting Miss Craik of Arbigland, long after stated to Allan Cunningham, that she was at a ball given by the Caledonian Hunt, and had stood up as the partner of a young officer, when the whisper of 'There's Burns!' ran through the assembly. 'I looked round,' says the lady, 'and there he was—his bright dark eyes full upon me. I shall never forget that look; it was one that gave me no pleasure. He soon left the meeting. I saw him next day. He would have passed me; but I spoke. I took his arm and said: "Come, you must see

me home." "Gladly, madam," said he; "but I'll not go down the plainstones, lest I have to share your company with some of those epauletted puppies with whom the street is full."

While burning with this ill-suppressed rage, he was so unfortunate as one evening to give an officer an advantage over him, through an imprudent escape of sentiment. It was in a private company, where the wine had, in the fashion of the day, circulated much too freely and too long. Burns gave as a toast: ' May our success in the present war be equal to the justice of our cause,' which Captain —— interpreted as a condemnation of the government, and took up warmly. We learn from a letter written by Burns next morning something of what passed on this occasion, and see with grief and shame the humiliation to which he was reduced by the fears engendered by his sense of dependence:

TO MR SAMUEL CLARKE, JUN., DUMFRIES.

*Sunday morning.*

DEAR SIR—I was, I know, drunk last night, but I am sober this morning. From the expressions Capt. —— made use of to me, had I had nobody's welfare to care for but my own, we should certainly have come, according to the manners of the world, to the necessity of murdering one another about the business. The words were such as, generally, I believe, end' in a brace of pistols; but I am still pleased to think that I did not ruin the peace and welfare of a wife and family of children in a drunken squabble. Further, you know that the report of certain political opinions being mine, has already once before brought me to the brink of destruction. I dread lest last night's business may be misrepresented in the same way. You, I beg, will take care to prevent it. I tax your wish for Mrs Burns's welfare with the task of waiting, as soon as possible, on every gentleman who was present, and state this to him, and, as you please, shew him this letter. What, after all, was the obnoxious toast? ' May our success in the present war be equal to the justice of our cause'—a toast that the most outrageous frenzy of loyalty cannot object to. I request and beg that this morning you will wait on the parties present at the foolish dispute. I shall only add, that I am truly sorry that a man who stood so high in my estimation as Mr —— should use me in the manner in which I conceive he has done.

R. B.

They who have rightly read the life and character of Burns, will be able in some degree to appreciate the heart-throes with which he would indite a letter like the above.

The evil primarily lay in intemperance. Burns appears at this time to have become involved to an unusual degree in society where the bottle was pushed too hard. It is to be feared that his

friends at Woodley Park were among those who took the lead in thus seducing him from the quiet domestic life in which it was his duty, and would otherwise have been his pleasure, to dwell. Mr Walter Riddel had now returned from the West Indies, and at such a time it was but natural that he should have his friends about him, and the ever brilliant bard amongst the number. But, unfortunately, at his board wine flowed in such profusion, that the guests were deprived of reason and memory alike. A few months after this time, the host was brought to the brink of a duel on account of some offensive expressions used by an English gentleman named Baker, who, having left Dumfries next day, was astonished some time after to receive a hostile visit from Mr Riddel, he having not the slightest recollection of anything which had taken place.<sup>1</sup> This may in some degree prepare the reader to hear of Burns being present at a symposium in Woodley Park, where the guests were raised to a pitch of Bacchanalian fury. Our bard came into the drawing-room with the rest, and, reason being off guard, he was guilty of an unheard-of act of rudeness towards the elegant hostess—a woman whom, in his ordinary moments, he regarded as a divinity not to be too rashly approached. One can imagine frolics of this kind which may involve no blame beyond that of the horrible drunkenness from which, to appearance, they take their rise; such was the pleading of Burns himself next day, if the following be, as we conjecture, the letter in which he sought the forgiveness of the lady:—

## TO MRS RIDDEL.

MADAM—I daresay that this is the first epistle you ever received from this nether world. I write you from the regions of hell, amid the horrors of the —. The time and manner of my leaving your earth I do not exactly know, as I took my departure in the heat of a fever of intoxication, contracted at your too hospitable mansion; but, on my arrival here, I was fairly tried, and sentenced to endure the purgatorial tortures of this infernal confine for the space of ninety-nine years, eleven months, and twenty-nine days, and all on account of the impropriety of my conduct yesternight under your roof. Here am I, laid on a bed of pitiless furze, with my aching head reclined on a pillow of ever-piercing thorn, while an infernal tormentor, wrinkled, and old, and cruel—his name, I think, is *Recollection*—with a whip of scorpions, forbids peace or rest to approach me, and keeps anguish eternally awake. Still, madam, if I could in any measure be reinstated in the good opinion of the fair circle whom my conduct last night so much injured, I think it would be an alleviation to my torments. For this reason, I trouble you with this letter. To

<sup>1</sup> *Dumfries Journal*, August 1794.

the men of the company I will make no apology. Your husband, who insisted on my drinking more than I chose, has no right to blame me; and the other gentlemen were partakers of my guilt. But to you, madam, I have much to apologise. Your good opinion I valued as one of the greatest acquisitions I had made on earth, and I was truly a beast to forfeit it. There was a Miss I——, too, a woman of fine sense, gentle and unassuming manners—do make, on my part, a miserable —— wretch's best apology to her. A Mrs G——, a charming woman, did me the honour to be prejudiced in my favour; this makes me hope that I have not outraged her beyond all forgiveness. To all the other ladies, please present my humblest contrition for my conduct, and my petition for their gracious pardon. O all ye powers of decency and decorum! whisper to them that my errors, though great, were involuntary—that an intoxicated man is the vilest of beasts—that it was not in my nature to be brutal to any one—that to be rude to a woman, when in my senses, was impossible with me—but——

\* \* \* \* \*

Regret! Remorse! Shame! ye three hell-hounds that ever dog my steps and bay at my heels, spare me! spare me!

Forgive the offences, and pity the perdition of, madam, your humble slave,

R. B.

He seems, at the same time, to have addressed a somewhat less abject pleading to Mr Riddel—

The friend whom wild from wisdom's way,

The fumes of wine infuriate send

(Not moony madness more astray)—

Who but deplores that hapless friend?

Mine was th' insensate frenzied part,

Ah! why should I such scenes outlive?—

Scenes so abhorrent to my heart!

'Tis thine to pity and forgive.

One might have expected that such apologies from Burns would have re-established his peace with Mr and Mrs Riddel, more especially as the blame lay very much with the gentleman himself. But, from whatever considerations, known or unknown, they were unforgiving, though the breach did not become quite desperate at first.

#### TO MRS RIDDEL.

MADAM—I return your commonplace-book. I have perused it with much pleasure, and would have continued my criticisms, but as it seems the critic has forfeited your esteem, his strictures must lose their value.

If it is true that ‘offences come only from the heart,’ before you I am guiltless. To admire, esteem, and prize you, as the most accomplished of women, and the first of friends—if these are crimes, I am the most offending thing alive.

In a face where I used to meet the kind complacency of friendly confidence, now to find cold neglect and contemptuous scorn, is a wrench that my heart can ill bear. It is, however, some kind of miserable good-luck, that while *de haut-en-bas* rigour may depress an unoffending wretch to the ground, it has a tendency to rouse a stubborn something in his bosom, which, though it cannot heal the wounds of his soul, is at least an opiate to blunt their poignancy.

With the profoundest respect for your abilities; the most sincere esteem, and ardent regard for your gentle heart and amiable manners; and the most fervent wish and prayer for your welfare, peace, and bliss—I have the honour to be, madam, your most devoted humble servant,

R. B.

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TO THE SAME.

I HAVE this moment got the song from Syme, and I am sorry to see that he has spoilt it a good deal. It shall be a lesson to me how I lend him anything again.

I have sent you *Werter*, truly happy to have any, the smallest opportunity of obliging you.

Tis true, madam, I saw you once since I was at Woodley; and that once froze the very life-blood of my heart. Your reception of me was such, that a wretch meeting the eye of his judge, about to pronounce sentence of death on him, could only have envied my feelings and situation. But I hate the theme, and never more shall write or speak on it.

One thing I shall proudly say, that I can pay Mrs R. a higher tribute of esteem, and appreciate her amiable worth more truly, than any man whom I have seen approach her.

R. B.

Time passed on, and the original breach was probably made wider by the tittle-tattle of injudicious friends. Certain it is that Burns became deeply incensed against this pair of ancient friends, and stooped to express his rancour in strains truly unworthy of at least his heart, if not his head. It was in the following strain that he lampooned the once admired Maria—a woman whom he had described as one of real talent, and who undoubtedly was so.

## MONODY

## ON A LADY FAMED FOR HER CAPRICE.

How cold is that bosom which folly once fired,  
How pale is that cheek where the rouge lately glistened !  
How silent that tongue which the echoes oft tired,  
How dull is that ear which to flattery so listened !

If sorrow and anguish their exit await,  
From friendship and dearest affection removed ;  
How doubly severer, Eliza, thy fate,  
Thou diedst unwept, as thou livedst unloved.

Loves, Graces, and Virtues, I call not on you ;  
So shy, grave, and distant, ye shed not a tear :  
But come, all ye offspring of Folly so true,  
And flowers let us cull for Eliza's cold bier.

We 'll search through the garden for each silly flower,  
We 'll roam through the forest for each idle weed ;  
But chiefly the nettle, so typical, shower,  
For none e'er approached her but rued the rash deed.

We 'll sculpture the marble, we 'll measure the lay ;  
Here Vanity strums on her idiot lyre ;  
There keen Indignation shall dart on her prey,  
Which spurning Contempt shall redeem from his ire.

## THE EPITAPH.

Here lies, now a prey to insulting neglect,  
What once was a butterfly, gay in life's beam :  
Want only of wisdom denied her respect,  
Want only of goodness denied her esteem.

At the head of the company of players at this time in Dumfries, was one named Williamson, who, like Burns, had been patronised to some extent by the gay Creole. Burns represented this individual under the name of Esopus, addressing Maria Riddel from a house of correction.

EPISTLE FROM ESOPUS TO MARIA.<sup>1</sup>

From those drear solitudes and frowsy cells,  
 Where infamy with sad repentance dwells;<sup>2</sup>  
 Where turnkeys make the jealous portal fast,  
 And deal from iron hands the spare repast;  
 Where truant 'prentices, yet young in sin,  
 Blush at the curious stranger peeping in;  
 Where strumpets, relics of the drunken roar,  
 Resolve to drink, nay, half to whore no more;  
 Where tiny thieves not destined yet to swing,  
 Beat hemp for others, riper for the string:  
 From these dire scenes my wretched lines I date,  
 To tell Maria her Esopus' fate.

'Alas ! I feel I am no actor here !'<sup>3</sup>  
 'Tis real hangmen, real scourges bear !  
 Prepare, Maria, for a horrid tale  
 Will turn thy very rouge to deadly pale;  
 Will make thy hair, though erst from gipsy polled,  
 By barber woven, and by barber sold,  
 Though twisted smooth with Harry's nicest care,  
 Like hoary bristles to erect and stare.  
 The hero of the mimic scene, no more  
 I start in Hamlet, in Othello roar;  
 Or haughty chieftain, 'mid the din of arms,  
 In Highland bonnet woo Malvina's charms;  
 While sans culottes stoop up the mountain high,  
 And steal from me Maria's prying eye.  
 Blest Highland bonnet ! once my proudest dress,  
 Now prouder still, Maria's temples press.  
 I see her wave thy towering plumes afar,  
 And call each coxcomb to the wordy war;

<sup>1</sup> Whether the circumstances alluded to in the following advertisement of Mr Williamson be connected with Burns's whim of representing the writer as in confinement, is unknown to us :—

*Theatre, Dumfries, Jan. 28, 1794.—Mr Williamson, after closing the theatrical season, is extremely sorry to feel the necessity of obtruding himself upon the public attention; but finding it has been very currently reported (to serve particular purposes) that the performers have not been paid their stipulated salaries throughout a long and a not most successful season, he respectfully begs the public to suspend their belief of reports at once so false and so injurious to the credit of the undertaking. Mr Williamson pledges himself to prove by the production of his accounts, to the satisfaction of any person interested in the inquiry, that there is a considerable balance due from the company to the last account of the theatre.'*—*Dumfries Weekly Journal.*

<sup>2</sup> In these dread solitudes and awful cells,  
 Where heavenly pensive contemplation dwells, &c.  
*Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard.*

<sup>3</sup> Lyttleton's Prologue to Thomson's *Coriolanus*, spoken by Mr Quin.

I see her face the first of Ireland's sons,<sup>1</sup>  
 And even out-Irish his Hibernian bronze;  
 The crafty colonel<sup>2</sup> leaves the tartaned lines  
 For other wars, where he a hero shines ;  
 The hopeful youth, in Scottish senate bred,  
 Who owns a Bushby's heart without the head,  
 Comes 'mid a string of coxcombs to display,  
 That *veni, vidi, vici*, is his way ;  
 The shrinking bard adown an alley skulks,  
 And dreads a meeting worse than Woolwich hulks ;  
 Though there, his heresies in church and state  
 Might well award him Muir and Palmer's fate :  
 Still she undaunted reels and rattles on,  
 And dares the public like a noontide sun.  
 (What scandal called Maria's jaunty stagger,  
 The ricket reeling of a crooked swagger ;  
 Whose spleen e'en worse than Burns's venom when  
 He dips in gall unmixed his eager pen—  
 And pours his vengeance in the burning line,  
 Who christened thus Maria's lyre divine ;  
 The idiot strum of vanity bemused,  
 And even th' abuse of poesy abused ;  
 Who called her verse a parish workhouse, made  
 For motley, foundling fancies, stolen or strayed ?)

A workhouse ! ah, that sound awakes my woes,  
 And pillows on the thorn my racked repose !  
 In durance vile here must I wake and weep,  
 And all my frowsy couch in sorrow steep !  
 That straw where many a rogue has lain of yore,  
 And vermined gipsies littered heretofore.  
 Why Lonsdale thus, thy wrath on vagrants pour ;  
 Must earth no rascal save thyself endure ?  
 Must thou alone in guilt immortal swell,  
 And make a vast monopoly of hell ?  
 Thou know'st the virtues cannot hate thee worse ;  
 The vices also, must they club their curse ?  
 Or must no tiny sin to others fall,  
 Because thy guilt's supreme enough for all ?

Maria, send me, too, thy griefs and cares ;  
 In all of thee sure thy Esopus shares.  
 As thou at all mankind the flag unfurls,  
 Who on my fair one satire's vengeance hurls ?  
 Who calls thee pert, affected, vain coquette,  
 A wit in folly, and a fool in wit ?

<sup>1</sup> Gillespie.<sup>2</sup> Colonel M'Dowall of Logan, noted as the Lothario of his county during many long years.

Who says that fool alone is not thy due,  
And quotes thy treacheries to prove it true ?  
Our force united on thy foes we'll turn,  
And dare the war with all of woman born :  
For who can write and speak as thou and I ?  
My periods that deciphering defy,  
And thy still matchless tongue that conquers all reply.

Burns alludes in this poem to a family which in his day occupied a conspicuous place in Dumfriesshire society. Mr John Bushby had risen from the humblest circumstances to wealth and importance, first as a solicitor, and afterwards as a banker. There was a vivid genius about him which rendered him almost as remarkable a person as Burns himself; but it had taken a purely worldly direction. Still conducting business in Dumfries, he had established himself as a country gentleman at Tinwald Downs, where he saw a great deal of company, and among others, often had the poet as his guest. It may be mentioned as a somewhat curious, but undoubted fact, that Burns did not always dine with the other gentlemen assembled in Mr Bushby's halls. There was a middle-aged lady, reduced from better circumstances, who exercised the duties of a housekeeper. In her room down stairs, Burns would dine by his own choice, and finally join the gentlemen in the dining-room after the ladies had retired. A lady nearly related to Mr Bushby, and who was occasionally in his house at that time, remembers that Burns was less a favourite with the ladies than the gentlemen. In the drawing-room one evening, when some of the elder ladies spoke censoriously of some points in his character, one young lady present ventured a pleading in his defence. Our bard, hearing of the circumstance, sent her a poetical address a few days afterwards, which she prized as a fine effusion of his genius, but which has unfortunately been lost.

A coldness in time took place between Burns and Bushby, and, according to our informant's recollection, it proceeded from a very trivial circumstance. At dinner one day, the pudding had been brought to table very hot. Mr Bushby, who had tasted and smarted from it—remembering perhaps the boy's trick in similar circumstances, which is the subject of a well-known story—recommended his wife to admonish the cook not to allow the pudding to become so *cold* in future before being sent up stairs. The bard, engaged in conversation, and not attending particularly to what was going on, fell into the snare, and in full confidence as to the temperature of the pudding, took a large piece into his mouth. The pain he expressed, as he desperately endeavoured

to swallow the scalding morsel, amused Mr Bushby exceedingly; but our poet was far from relishing the joke. *Tantaene animis.* So commenced a dislike on Burns's part towards Mr Bushby, which probably other circumstances increased, and of which we have hereafter various symptoms. The person, however, more particularly alluded to in Esopus's Lines, was Mr Bushby Maitland, son of John Bushby, then a young advocate, and supposed to be by no means the equal of his father in point of intellect.

The only excuse which can be presented for Burns with respect to his pasquinades on Mrs Riddel, lies in the excessive bitterness of his own feelings during this winter. His misery is expressed in a letter which shews that he had better resources than satire, for the soothing of his vexed spirit, so far as soothing was possible:—

## TO MR ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM.

25th February 1794.

CANST thou minister to a mind diseased? Canst thou speak peace and rest to a soul toss'd on a sea of troubles, without one friendly star to guide her course, and dreading that the next surge may overwhelm her? Canst thou give to a frame, tremblingly alive as the tortures of suspense, the stability and hardihood of the rock that braves the blast? If thou canst not do the least of these, why wouldst thou disturb me in my miseries with thy inquiries after me?

For these two months, I have not been able to lift a pen. My constitution and frame were, *ab origine*, blasted with a deep, incurable taint of hypochondria, which poisons my existence. Of late, a number of domestic vexations, and some pecuniary share in the ruin of these cursed times—losses which, though trifling, were yet what I could ill bear—have so irritated me, that my feelings at times could only be envied by a reprobate spirit listening to the sentence that dooms it to perdition.

Are you deep in the language of consolation? I have exhausted in reflection every topic of comfort. *A heart at ease* would have been charmed with my sentiments and reasonings; but as to myself, I was like Judas Iscariot preaching the gospel: he might melt and mould the hearts of those around him, but his own kept its native incorrigibility.

Still, there are two great pillars that bear us up amid the wreck of misfortune and misery. The ONE is composed of the different modifications of a certain noble, stubborn something in man, known by the names of courage, fortitude, magnanimity. The OTHER is made up of those feelings and sentiments which, however the sceptic may deny them, or the enthusiast disfigure them, are yet, I

am convinced, original and component parts of the human soul; those *senses of the mind*—if I may be allowed the expression—which connect us with, and link us to those awful obscure realities—an all-powerful and equally beneficent God, and a world to come, beyond death and the grave. The first gives the nerve of combat, while a ray of hope beams on the field: the last pours the balm of comfort into the wounds which time can never cure.

I do not remember, my dear Cunningham, that you and I ever talked on the subject of religion at all. I know some who laugh at it, as the trick of the crafty FEW to lead the undiscerning MANY; or, at most, as an uncertain obscurity, which mankind can never know anything of, and with which they are fools if they give themselves much to do. Nor would I quarrel with a man for his irreligion, any more than I would for his want of a musical ear. I would regret that he was shut out from what, to me and to others, were such superlative sources of enjoyment. It is in this point of view, and for this reason, that I will deeply imbue the mind of every child of mine with religion. If my son should happen to be a man of feeling, sentiment, and taste, I shall thus add largely to his enjoyments. Let me flatter myself, that this sweet little fellow, who is just now running about my desk, will be a man of a melting, ardent, glowing heart; and an imagination delighted with the painter, and rapt with the poet. Let me figure him wandering out in a sweet evening, to inhale the balmy gales, and enjoy the growing luxuriance of the spring; himself the while in the blooming youth of life. He looks abroad on all nature, and through nature up to nature's God. His soul, by swift, delighting degrees, is rapt above this sublunary sphere, until he can be silent no longer, and bursts out into the glorious enthusiasm of Thomson—

‘ These, as they change, Almighty Father, these  
Are but the varied God. The rolling year  
Is full of thee ;—’

and so on, in all the spirit and ardour of that charming hymn. These are no ideal pleasures—they are real delights; and I ask, what of the delights among the sons of men are superior, not to say equal, to them? And they have this precious, vast addition, that conscious virtue stamps them for her own, and lays hold on them to bring herself into the presence of a witnessing, judging, and approving God.

R. B.

‘ They,’ says Mr Lockhart, ‘ who have been told that Burns was ever a degraded being—who have permitted themselves to believe that his only consolations were those of “the opiate guilt applies to grief,” will do well to pause over this noble letter, and judge for themselves.’

[TO MR JAMES JOHNSON.]

DUMFRIES, [February?] 1794.

MY DEAR SIR—I send you by my friend, Mr Wallace,<sup>1</sup> forty-one songs for your fifth volume. Mr Clarke has also a good many, if he have not, with his usual indolence, *cast them at the cocks*. I have still a good parcel amongst my hands in scraps and fragments; so that I hope we will make shift with our last volume.

You should have heard from me long ago; but over and above some vexatious share in the pecuniary losses of these accursed times, I have all this winter been plagued with low spirits and blue devils; so that *I have almost hung my harp on the willow-trees*.

In the meantime, at your leisure, give a copy of the *Museum* to my worthy friend, Mr Peter Hill, bookseller, to bind for me, interleaved with blank leaves, exactly as he did the Laird of Glenriddel's, that I may insert every anecdote I can learn, together with my own criticisms and remarks on the songs. A copy of this kind I shall leave with you, the editor, to publish at some after-period, by way of making the *Museum* a book famous to the end of time, and you renowned for ever.

I have got a Highland dirk, for which I have great veneration, as it once was the dirk of Lord Balmerino. It fell into bad hands, who stripped it of the silver-mounting, as well as the knife and fork. I have some thoughts of sending it to your care, to get it mounted anew. Our friend Clarke owes me an account, somewhere about one pound, which would go a good way in paying the expense. I remember you once settled an account in this way before, and as you still have money-matters to settle with him, you might accommodate us both. . . . My best compliments to your worthy old father and your better-half.—Yours,

R. BURNS.

The songs undoubtedly and wholly, or almost wholly, by Burns, furnished for Johnson's fifth volume, were as follow:—

THE LOVELY LASS OF INVERNESS.

TUNE—*Lass of Inverness.*

The lovely lass o' Inverness,  
Nae joy nor pleasure can she see;  
For e'en and morn she cries, alas!  
And aye the saut tear blin's her ee;

<sup>1</sup> Mr Wallace was a young 'writer' in Dumfries. He deserves honourable mention in the Life of Burns, on account of the kind zeal he displayed, two or three years after this date, in behalf of the bereaved family of the poet.

Drumossie Moor—Drumossie-day—  
 A waefu' day it was to me!  
 For there I lost my father dear—  
 My father dear, and brethren three.

Their winding-sheet the bluidy clay,  
 Their graves are growing green to see;  
 And by them lies the dearest lad  
 That ever blest a woman's ee!  
 Now wae to thee, thou cruel lord,  
 A bluidy man I trow thou be;  
 For mony a heart thou hast made sair,  
 That ne'er did wrong to thine or thee.

[The first half stanza of this song is from an older composition, which Burns here improved upon.]

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## A R E D, R E D R O S E.

TUNE—*Graham's Strathspey.*

O my luve's like a red, red rose,  
 That's newly sprung in June:  
 O my luve's like the melodie,  
 That's sweetly played in tune.  
 As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,  
 So deep in luve am I:  
 And I will luve thee still, my dear,  
 Till a' the seas gang dry.  
 Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,  
 And the rocks melt wi' the sun;  
 I will luve thee still, my dear,  
 While the sands o' life shall run.  
 And fare thee weel, my only luve!  
 And fare thee weel awhile!  
 And I will come again, my luve,  
 Though it were ten thousand mile.

[This song was written by Burns as 'an improvement upon a street ditty, which Mr Peter Buchan says was composed by a Lieutenant Hinches, as a farewell to his sweetheart, when on the eve of parting. Various versions of the original song are given in Hogg and Motherwell's edition of Burns, including one from a stall sheet containing six excellent new songs, which Mr Motherwell conjectures to have been printed about 1770, and of which his copy bore these words on its title, in a childish scrawl believed to be that of the Ayrshire bard, 'Robine Burns aught this buik and no other.' A version more elegant than any of these was communicated to me by the late Mr Robert Hogg in 1823:—

O fare thee well, my own true love,  
 O fare thee well awhile;  
 But I'll come back and see thee, love,  
 Though I go ten thousand mile.

Ten thousand mile is a long, long way,  
 When from me you are gone :  
 You leave me here to lament and sigh,  
 But you never can hear my moan.

Though all our friends should never be pleased—  
 They are grown so lofty and high,  
 I never will break the vows I have made,  
 Till the stars fall from the sky.

Till the stars fall from the sky, my love,  
 And the rocks melt wi' the sun :  
 I'll aye prove true to thee, my love,  
 Till all these things are done.

Do you not see yon turtle-dove  
 That sits on yonder tree ?  
 It is making its moan for the loss of its love,  
 As I shall do for thee.

Now fare thee well, my dearest love,  
 Till I return on shore ;  
 And thou shalt be my only love,  
 Though it were for evermore.

It is worth while thus to preserve one or two of the original songs on which Burns improved, if only to mark the vastness of the improvement.]

## A VISION.

As I stood by yon roofless tower,  
 Where the wa'-flower scents the dewy air,  
 Where th' howlet mourns in her ivy bower,  
 And tells the midnight moon her care ;

The winds were laid, the air was still,  
 The stars they shot alang the sky ;  
 The fox was howling on the hill,  
 And the distant echoing glens reply.

The stream, adown its hazelly path,  
 Was rushing by the ruined wa's,  
 Hasting to join the sweeping Nith,<sup>1</sup>  
 Whose distant roaring swells and fa's.

The cauld blue north was streaming forth  
 Her lights, wi' hissing eerie din ;  
 Athort the lift they start and shift,  
 Like fortune's favours, tint as win.

<sup>1</sup> *Var.*—To join your river on the Strath.

By heedless chance I turned mine eyes,  
 And, by the moonbeam, shook to see  
 A stern and stalwart ghaist arise,  
 Attired as minstrels wont to be<sup>1</sup>

Had I a statue been o' stane,  
 His darin' look had daunted me;  
 And on his bonnet graved was plain,  
 The sacred posy—‘Libertie!’

And frae his harp sic strains did flow,  
 Might roused the slumb'ring dead to hear;  
 But oh! it was a tale of wo,  
 As ever met a Briton's ear.

He sang wi' joy the former day,  
 He weeping wailed his latter times;  
 But what he said it was nae play—  
 I winna ventur't in my rhymes.

A favourite walk of Burns during his residence in Dumfries was one along the right bank of the river above the town, terminating at the ruins of Lincluden Abbey and Church, which occupy a romantic situation on a piece of rising-ground in the angle at the junction of the Cluden Water with the Nith. These ruins include many fine fragments of ancient decorative architecture, and are enshrined in a natural scene of the utmost beauty. Burns, according to his eldest son, often mused amidst the Lincluden ruins. There is one position on a little mount, to the south of the church, where a couple of landscapes of witching loveliness are obtained, set, as it were, in two of the windows of the ancient building. It was probably the ‘Calvary’ of the ancient church precinct. This the younger Burns remembers to have been a favourite resting-place of the poet.

Such is the locality of the grand and thrilling ode, entitled *A Vision*, in which he hints—for more than a hint could not be ventured upon—his sense of the degradation of the ancient manly spirit of his country under the conservative terrors of the passing era.

<sup>1</sup> *Var.*—Now looking over firth and fauld  
 Her horn the pale-faced Cynthia reared;  
 When, lo! in form of minstrel auld,  
 A stern and stalwart ghaist appeared.

## OUT OVER THE FORTH.

**TUNE—***Charlie Gordon's welcome Hame.*

Out over the Forth I look to the north,  
But what is the north and its Highlands to me?  
The south nor the east gie ease to my breast,  
The far foreign land, or the wild rolling sea.

But I look to the west, when I gae to rest,  
That happy my dreams and my slumbers may be;  
For far in the west lives he I loe best,  
The lad that is dear to my babie and me.

## **LOUIS, WHAT RECK I BY THEE?**

**TUNE—***Louis, what reck I by thee?*

Louis, what reck I by thee,  
Or Geordie on his ocean?  
Dyvor, beggar loons to me—  
I reign in Jeanie's bosom.

## SOMEBODY!

**TUNE—*For the Sake of Somebody.***

My heart is sair—I dare na tell—  
    My heart is sair for somebody ;  
I could wake a winter night  
    For the sake of somebody.  
        Oh-hon ! for somebody !  
        Oh-hey ! for somebody !  
I could range the world around,  
    For the sake o' somebody !

Ye powers that smile on virtuous love,  
O sweetly smile on somebody !  
Fraelka danger keep him free,  
And send me safe my somebody !  
Oh-hon ! for somebody !  
Oh-hey ! for somebody !  
I wad do—what wad I not ?  
For the sake o' somebody !

[‘The whole of this song was written by Burns, except the third and fourth lines of stanza first, which are taken from Ramsay’s song to the same tune.’—*Stenhouse.*]

## WILT THOU BE MY DEARIE ?

AIR—*The Sutor's Dochter.*

Wilt thou be my dearie ?  
 When sorrow wrings thy gentle heart,  
 Wilt thou let me cheer thee ?  
 By the treasure of my soul,  
 That's the love I bear thee !  
 I swear and vow that only thou  
 Shall ever be my dearie.  
 Only thou, I swear and vow,  
 Shall ever be my dearie.

Lassie, say thou loes me ;  
 Or if thou wilt na be my ain,  
 Say na thou'l refuse me :  
 If it winna, canna be,  
 Thou, for thine may choose me,  
 Let me, lassie, quickly die,  
 Trusting that thou loes me.  
 Lassie, let me quickly die,  
 Trusting that thou loes me.

## LOVELY POLLY STEWART.

TUNE—*Ye're welcome, Charlie Stewart.*

O lovely Polly Stewart !  
 O charming Polly Stewart !  
 There's not a flower that blooms in May  
 That's half so fair as thou art.  
 The flower it blaws, it fades and fa's,  
 And art can ne'er renew it ;  
 But worth and truth eternal youth  
 Will give to Polly Stewart.

May he whose arms shall fauld thy charms,  
 Possess a leal and true heart ;  
 To him be given to ken the heaven  
 He grasps in Polly Stewart.  
 O lovely Polly Stewart !  
 O charming Polly Stewart !  
 There's ne'er a flower that blooms in May  
 That's half so sweet as thou art.

[Polly Stewart was the daughter of a certain Willie Stewart, on whom Burns wrote some impromptu stanzas. She was reared in comfortable circumstances, a few miles from Burns's residence at Ellisland, and was married to a gentleman of large property. Sad to relate of one for whom Burns promised that worth and truth would give her eternal youth, this poor woman fell aside from the path of honour, and sunk into the most humble circumstances in her old age. It was stated a few years ago, that she lived as 'a poor lavender' (to use a phrase of Barbour's) in Maxwelltown. She is believed to have subsequently died in France.]

COULD AUGHT OF SONG.<sup>1</sup>TUNE—*At Setting Day.*

Could aught of song declare my pains,  
 Could artful numbers move thee,  
 The Muse should tell, in laboured strains,  
 O Mary, how I love thee!  
 They who but feign a wounded heart  
 May teach the lyre to languish;  
 But what avails the pride of art,  
 When wastes the soul with anguish?

Then let the sudden bursting sigh  
 The heart-felt pang discover;  
 And in the keen, yet tender eye,  
 O read th' imploring lover!  
 For well I know thy gentle mind  
 Disdains art's gay disguising;  
 Beyond what fancy e'er refined,  
 The voice of nature prizes.

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## WAE IS MY HEART.

TUNE—*Wae is my Heart.*

Wae is my heart, and the tear's in my ee;  
 Lang, lang, joy's been a stranger to me:  
 Forsaken and friendless, my burden I bear,  
 And the sweet voice o' pity ne'er sounds in my ear.

Love, thou hast pleasures, and deep hae I loved:  
 Love, thou hast sorrows, and sair hae I proved;  
 But this bruisèd heart that now bleeds in my breast,  
 I can feel its throbings will soon be at rest.

Oh, if I were happy, where happy I hae been,  
 Down by yon stream, and yon bonnie castle-green;  
 For there he is wand'ring, and musing on me,  
 Wha wad soon dry the tear frae Phillis's ee.

<sup>1</sup> The air to which Burns wrote this song, was the production of Dr Samuel Howard, organist of St Clement's Danes in the middle of the last century. It was composed for Ramsay's song, *At Setting Day and Rising Morn*, and in this connection attained some popularity.

## HERE'S TO THY HEALTH, MY BONNIE LASS.

TUNE—*Laggan Burn.*

Here's to thy health, my bonnie lass,  
 Guid-night, and joy be wi' thee;  
 I'll come nae mair to thy bower-door,  
 To tell thee that I loe thee.  
 O dinna think, my pretty pink,  
 'But I can live without thee :  
 I vow and swear I dinna care  
 How lang ye look about ye.

Thou'rt aye sae free informing me  
 Thou hast nae mind to marry ;  
 I'll be as free informing thee  
 Nae time hae I to tarry.  
 I ken thy friends try ilka means,  
 Frae wedlock to delay thee ;  
 Depending on some higher chance--  
 But fortune may betray thee.

I ken they scorn my low estate,  
 But that does never grieve me ;  
 But I'm as free as any he,  
 Sma' siller will relieve me.  
 I count my health my greatest wealth,  
 Sae long as I'll enjoy it :  
 I'll fear nae scant, I'll bode nae want,  
 As lang's I get employment.

But far-off fowls hae feathers fair,  
 And aye until ye try them :  
 Though they seem fair, still have a care,  
 They may prove waur than I am.  
 But at twal at night, when the moon shines bright,  
 My dear, I'll come and see thee ;  
 For the man that loes his mistress weel,  
 Nae travel makes him weary.

Of the songs which appeared in Johnson's fifth volume, there are others which Burns had to some extent amended as they passed through his hands; but as the songs themselves are of no great merit, and the improvements by Burns make no conspicuous appearance amidst their rough, and often indelicate stanzas, they are postponed to a subordinate place in this work.

After all, the fifth volume of Johnson did not apparently exhaust the contributions of the poet, for in a sixth, published in 1803, there are a few pieces undoubtedly by him.

## ANNA, THY CHARMS.

TUNE—*Bonnie Mary.*

Anna, thy charms my bosom fire,  
 And waste my soul with care ;  
 But, ah ! how bootless to admire,  
 When fated to despair !  
 Yet in thy presence, lovely fair,  
 To hope may be forgiven ;  
 For sure 'twere impious to despair,  
 So much in sight of heaven.

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## MY LADY'S GOWN, THERE'S GAIRS UPON'T.

\* \* \* \*

Out ower yon muir, out ower yon moss,  
 Whare gor-cocks through the heather pass,  
 There wons auld Colin's bonnie lass—  
 A lily in a wilderness.

Sae sweetly move her gentle limbs,  
 Like music notes o' lovers' hymns :  
 The diamond dew is her een sae blue,  
 Where laughing love sae wanton swims.

\* \* \* \*

## JOCKEY'S TAEN THE PARTING KISS.

TUNE—*Jockey's taen the parting Kiss.*

Jockey's taen the parting kiss,  
 O'er the mountains he is gane ;  
 And with him is a' my bliss,  
 Nought but griefs with me remain.  
 Spare my luve, ye winds that blaw,  
 Plashy sleets and beating rain !  
 Spare my luve, thou feathery snaw,  
 Drifting o'er the frozen plain.

When the shades of evening creep  
 O'er the day's fair, gladsome ee,  
 Sound and safely may he sleep,  
 Sweetly blithe his waukening be !  
 He will think on her he loves,  
 Fondly he'll repeat her name ;  
 For where'er he distant roves,  
 Jockey's heart is still at hame.

## O LAY THY LOOF IN MINE, LASS.

TUNE—*Cordwainers' March.*

O lay thy loof in mine, lass,  
 In mine, lass, in mine, lass;  
 And swear on thy white hand, lass,  
 That thou wilt be my ain.

palm

A slave to love's unbounded sway,  
 He aft has wrought me meikle wae;  
 But now he is my deadly fae,  
 Unless thou be my ain.

There's mony a lass has broke my rest,  
 That for a blink I hae loed best;  
 But thou art queen within my breast,  
 For ever to remain.

an instant

O lay thy loof in mine, lass,  
 In mine, lass, in mine, lass;  
 And swear on thy white hand, lass,  
 That thou wilt be my ain.

## O MALLY'S MEEK, MALLY'S SWEET.

O Mally's meek, Mally's sweet,  
 Mally's modest and discreet,  
 Mally's rare, Mally's fair,  
 Mally's every way complete.

As I was walking up the street,  
 A barefit maid I chanced to meet;  
 But oh, the road was very hard  
 For that fair maiden's tender feet.

It were mair meet that those fine feet  
 Were weel laced up in silken shoon;  
 And 'twere more fit that she should sit  
 Within yon chariot gilt aboon.

Her yellow hair, beyond compare,  
 Comes trinkling down her swan-like neck;  
 And her two eyes, like stars in skies,  
 Would keep a sinking ship frae wreck.

It is not of course to be supposed that Burns was to mend his breach with the family at Woodley Park by lampooning the lady.

Nor could the scandal of this quarrel, and of its sequel of coarse invectives, be expected to extenuate the more general odium in which politics had involved him. Nor did the evil stop here. Very naturally, the good couple at Carse, by whose fireside he had spent so many happy evenings, took part with their friends at Woodley; and most sad it is to relate, that 'the worthy Glenriddel, deep read in old coins,' adopted sentiments of reprobation and aversion towards the Bard of the Whistle. It cannot be doubted that this was a feeling which would pervade all within the Riddel influence, as well as many unconcerned persons who, having to judge between a pretty woman of fashion, and clever Mr Burns—once a ploughman, and now an exciseman—would not perhaps take much trouble to ascertain the extent to which the lady had given provocation to so ungallant a muse.

In April, the Laird of Carse died, unreconciled to our poet, who, remembering only his worth and former kindness, immediately penned an elegiac sonnet on the sad event. This must be admitted as a magnanimous act on Burns's part, under the circumstances; and its merit is the greater, that it was done on the spur of a first impulse—the sonnet being completed so early as to appear in the local newspaper, beneath the announcement of Glenriddel's death.

[SONNET ON THE DEATH OF GLENRIDDLE.]

No more, ye warblers of the wood, no more;  
Nor pour your descant grating on my soul:  
Thou young-eyed Spring, gay in thy verdant stole—  
More welcome were to me grim Winter's wildest roar.

How can ye charm, ye flowers, with all your dyes?  
Ye blow upon the sod that wraps my friend!  
How can I to the tuneful strain attend?  
That strain flows round th' untimely tomb where Riddel lies.

Yes, pour, ye warblers, pour the notes of wo,  
And soothe the Virtues weeping o'er his bier:  
The Man of Worth, and hath not left his peer,  
Is in his narrow house, for ever darkly low.

Thee, Spring, again with joy shall others greet;  
Me, memory of my loss will only meet.

Burns, besides giving Glenriddel an interleaved copy of the *Musical Museum*, enriched with many manuscript notes, had lent him a private manuscript volume, in which he kept such of his minor occasional compositions as he deemed unworthy of being

printed. This volume not being returned before Glenriddel's death, Burns, after a decent interval, bethought him of reclaiming it—a task rendered difficult by the relation in which he now stood regarding the family. He adopted the resolution of seeking the good offices of a sister of Mrs Riddel; and the letter which he wrote to that lady fortunately survives, to reveal to us his sentiments respecting the odium which had been cast upon him. It fully appears that he was at this time suffering reproach for 'imputed improprieties,' but considered himself as a victim of prejudice and caprice.

TO MISS ——.

[DUMFRIES, May or June 1794?]

MADAM—Nothing short of a kind of absolute necessity could have made me trouble you with this letter. Except my ardent and just esteem for your sense, taste, and worth, every sentiment arising in my breast, as I put pen to paper to you, is painful. The scenes I have passed with the friend of my soul, and his amiable connections! the wrench at my heart to think that he is gone, for ever gone from me, never more to meet in the wanderings of a weary world! and the cutting reflection of all, that I had most unfortunately, though most undeservedly, lost the confidence of that soul of worth, ere it took its flight!—these, madam, are sensations of no ordinary anguish. However you also may be offended with some *imputed* improprieties of mine, sensibility you know I possess, and sincerity none will deny me.

To oppose those prejudices which have been raised against me, is not the business of this letter. Indeed, it is a warfare I know not how to wage. The powers of positive vice I can in some degree calculate, and against direct malevolence I can be on my guard; but who can estimate the fatuity of giddy caprice, or ward off the unthinking mischief of precipitate folly?

I have a favour to request of you, madam; and of your sister, Mrs [Riddel], through your means. You know that, at the wish of my late friend, I made a collection of all my trifles in verse which I had ever written. They are many of them local, some of them puerile and silly, and all of them unfit for the public eye. As I have some little fame at stake—a fame that I trust may live when the hate of those 'who watch for my halting,' and the contumelious sneer of those whom accident has made my superiors, will, with themselves, be gone to the regions of oblivion—I am uneasy now for the fate of those manuscripts. Will Mrs [Riddel] have the goodness to destroy them, or return them to me? As a pledge of friendship they were bestowed; and that circumstance, indeed, was all their merit. Most unhappily for me, that merit they no longer possess; and I hope that Mrs [Riddel]'s goodness, which I well know, and ever will revere,

will not refuse this favour to a man whom she once held in some degree of estimation.

With the sincerest esteem, I have the honour to be, madam, &c.  
R. B.

The fact that the sonnet on Glenriddel stands almost alone as a composition of Burns during the first half of 1794,<sup>1</sup> is tolerably expressive evidence of the wretchedness which he then endured. During this dismal period, even the favourite pursuit into which he had been drawn by Mr Thomson was nearly at a stand—the following being the only portions of the correspondence which belong to it :—

## MR THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 17<sup>th</sup> April 1794.

MY DEAR SIR—Owing to the distress of our friend for the loss of his child, at the time of his receiving your admirable but melancholy letter, I had not an opportunity, till lately, of perusing it.<sup>2</sup> How sorry I am to find Burns saying: ‘Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased?’ while he is delighting others from one end of the island to the other. Like the hypochondriac who went to consult a physician upon his case—‘Go,’ says the doctor, ‘and see the famous Carlini, who keeps all Paris in good-humour.’ ‘Alas! sir,’ replied the patient, ‘I am that unhappy Carlini !’

Your plan for our meeting together pleases me greatly, and I trust that by some means or other it will soon take place; but your bacchanalian challenge almost frightens me, for I am a miserably weak drinker!

Allan is much gratified by your good opinion of his talents. He has just begun a sketch from your *Cotter's Saturday Night*, and, if it pleaseth himself in the design, he will probably etch or engrave it. In subjects of the pastoral and humorous kind he is, perhaps, unrivalled by any artist living. He fails a little in giving beauty and grace to his females, and his colouring is sombre, otherwise his paintings and drawings would be in greater request.

I like the music of the *Sutor's Dochter*, and will consider whether it shall be added to the last volume: your verses to it are pretty; but your humorous English song, to suit *Jo Janet*, is inimitable. What think you of the air, *Within a Mile of Edinburgh*? It has always struck me as a modern English imitation; but it is said to be Oswald's, and is so much liked, that I believe I must include it. The verses are little better than namby-pamby. Do you consider it worth a stanza or two?

<sup>1</sup> On the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1794, Woodley Park was advertised for sale. Mr Walter Riddel soon after inherited Friars' Carse from his brother, and that estate was in like manner advertised in June.

<sup>2</sup> The letter to Mr Cunningham, dated 25<sup>th</sup> February.

## BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

May 1794.

MY DEAR SIR—I return you the plates, with which I am highly pleased; I would humbly propose, instead of the younker knitting stockings, to put a stock and horn into his hands. A friend of mine, who is positively the ablest judge on the subject I have ever met with, and though an unknown, is yet a superior artist with the burin, is quite charmed with Allan's manner. I got him a peep of the *Gentle Shepherd*; and he pronounces Allan a most original artist of great excellence.

For my part, I look on Mr Allan's choosing my favourite poem for his subject, to be one of the highest compliments I have ever received.

I am quite vexed at Pleyel's being cooped up in France, as it will put an entire stop to our work. Now, and for six or seven months, I shall be quite in song, as you shall see by and by. I know you value a composition because it is made by one of the great ones as little as I do. However, I got an air, pretty enough, composed by Lady Elizabeth Heron of Heron, which she calls *The Banks of Cree*. Cree is a beautiful romantic stream; and as her ladyship is a particular friend of mine, I have written the following song to it:—

## THE BANKS OF CREE.

TUNE—*The Banks of Cree*.

Here is the glen, and here the bower,  
All underneath the birchen shade;  
The village-bell has tolled the hour,  
O what can stay my lovely maid?

'Tis not Maria's whispering call;  
'Tis but the balmy-breathing gale;  
Mixed with some warbler's dying fall,  
The dewy star of eve to hail.

It is Maria's voice I hear!—  
So calls the woodlark in the grove,  
His little faithful mate to cheer;  
At once 'tis music and 'tis love.

And art thou come?—and art thou true?  
O welcome, dear, to love and me!  
And let us all our vows renew,  
Along the flowery banks of Cree.

It is to the latter part of the half-year in question, that we must assign an affecting anecdote which Mr Lockhart derived

from Mr David M'Culloch of Ardwell—then a young man on intimate terms with our bard.<sup>1</sup> According to Mr Lockhart: ‘Mr M'Culloch was seldom more grieved than, when riding into Dumfries one fine summer evening to attend a county ball,<sup>2</sup> he saw Burns walking alone on the shady side of the principal street of the town, while the opposite side was gay with successive groups of ladies and gentlemen, all drawn together for the festivities of the night, not one of whom appeared willing to recognise him. The horseman dismounted and joined Burns, who, on his proposing to him to cross the street, said: “Nay, nay, my young friend—that’s all over now;” and quoted after a pause some verses of Lady Grizel Baillie’s pathetic ballad:

“ His bonnet stood ance fu’ fair on his brow,  
His auld ane looked better than mony ane’s new;  
But now he let’s wear ony gate it will hing,  
And casts himsel’ dowie upon the corn-bing.

Oh, were we young, as we ance hae been,  
We sud hae been galloping down on yon green,  
And linking it ower the lily-white lea—  
*And werena my heart light I wad die.*”

‘ It was little in Burns’s character to let his feelings on certain subjects escape in this fashion. He, immediately after citing these verses, assumed the sprightliness of his most pleasing manner; and taking his young friend home with him, entertained him very agreeably until the hour of the ball arrived, with a bowl of his usual potion, and bonnie Jean’s singing of some verses which he had recently composed.’

Neither was it in Burns’s character to remain permanently under the dejection which had beset him during the early part of this year. The summer came on, to tempt him into the country, and charm him into song. Time softened away the odium bestowed upon him by the superior circles in Dumfries. Even the political horizon began to clear a little, now that reaction for moderation was setting in at Paris, and Robespierre’s downfall was approaching. Britain had stood the first shock of French propagandism; a great naval victory had cheered the ministry; and the propertied classes began to feel less nervous. After a few months had

<sup>1</sup> In the minute of the meeting of the Dumfries St Andrew’s Lodge for May 6, 1794, D. M'Culloch is admitted a member. Burns is not mentioned in the list of those present.

<sup>2</sup> The King’s Birthday of 1794 was celebrated in Dumfries with unusual cordiality and variety of demonstrations. Two large dinner-parties met at the inns, and at six o’clock there was a grand *réunion* in the Town Hall, to drink the king’s health. The *Loyal Native Club* wore ribbons embroidered by loyal ladies in their hats, and the multitude was regaled with bonfires. It is very likely that this was the occasion of Mr M'Culloch’s rencontre with Burns.

passed over, Burns recovered in a great measure from his depressed state, and once more thought that a supervisorship might be in store for him. It is to be feared, however, that some degree of permanent sourness towards ‘respectable people’ from this time remained in his mind, accompanied by a greater tendency for society beneath even his own humble grade. It also appears that the vigour of his constitution was now beginning, at five-and-thirty, to give way under the effects of his generally imprudent course of life.

It was very probably in consequence of an appointment made at their late rencontre, that Burns wrote as follows to Mr M‘Culloch. The allusion to a visit to Mr Heron of Heron at Kerroughtree, is characteristic of the proud poet, and also valuable as shewing that at least a Whig country gentleman deemed him presentable at this time before good society.

TO DAVID M‘CULLOCH, ESQ.

DUMFRIES, 21st June 1794.

MY DEAR SIR—My long-projected journey through your country is at last fixed; and on Wednesday next, if you have nothing of more importance to do, take a saunter down to Gatehouse about two or three o‘clock; I shall be happy to take a draught of M‘Kune’s best with you. Collector Syme will be at Glen’s about that time, and will meet us about dish-of-tea hour. Syme goes also to Kerroughtree, and let me remind you of your kind promise to accompany me there: I will need all the friends I can muster, for I am indeed ill at ease whenever I approach your honourables and right honourables.

Yours sincerely,

R. B.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

CASTLE-DOUGLAS, 25th June 1794.

HERE, in a solitary inn, in a solitary village, am I set by myself, to amuse my brooding fancy as I may. Solitary confinement, you know, is Howard’s favourite idea of reclaiming sinners; so let me consider by what fatality it happens that I have so long been so exceeding sinful as to neglect the correspondence of the most valued friend I have on earth. To tell you that I have been in poor health will not be excuse enough, though it is true. I am afraid that I am about to suffer for the follies of my youth. My medical friends threaten me with a flying gout; but I trust they are mistaken.

I am just going to trouble your critical patience with the first sketch of a stanza I have been framing as I passed along the road. The subject is liberty: you know, my honoured friend, how dear the

theme is to me. I design it as an irregular ode for General Washington's birthday. After having mentioned the degeneracy of other kingdoms, I come to Scotland thus :

Thee, Caledonia, thy wild heaths among,  
 Thee, famed for martial deed and sacred song,  
 To thee I turn with swimming eyes ;  
 Where is that soul of freedom fled ?  
 Immingled with the mighty dead,  
 Beneath the hallowed turf where Wallace lies !  
 Hear it not, Wallace, in thy bed of death,  
 Ye babbling winds, in silence sweep,  
 Disturb ye not the hero's sleep,  
 Nor give the coward secret breath.  
 Is this the power in freedom's war,  
 That wont to bid the battle rage ?

With the additions of—

Behold that eye which shot immortal hate,  
 Braved usurpation's boldest daring ;  
 That arm which, nerved with thundering fate,  
 Crushed the despot's proudest bearing :  
 One quenched in darkness like the sinking star,  
 And one the palsied arm of tottering, powerless age.

You will probably have another scrawl from me in a stage  
 or two.

R. B.

There has been preserved one more letter to Clarinda, and from several allusions contained in it, it seems not unlikely to have been penned at the same time with the preceding epistle to Mrs Dunlop.

#### TO CLARINDA.

BEFORE you ask me why I have not written you, first let me be informed by you, *how I shall write you?* ‘In friendship,’ you say; and I have many a time taken up my pen to try an epistle of ‘friendship’ to you, but it will not do; ‘tis like Jove grasping a popgun after having wielded his thunder. When I take up the pen, recollection ruins me. Ah, my ever-dearest Clarinda! Clarinda! What a host of memory’s tenderest offspring crowd on my fancy at that sound! But I must not indulge that subject; you have forbid it.

I am extremely happy to learn that your precious health is re-established, and that you are once more fit to enjoy that satisfaction in existence which health alone can give us. My old friend Ainslie has indeed been kind to you. Tell him, that I envy him the power

of serving you. I had a letter from him awhile ago, but it was so dry, so distant, so like a card to one of his clients, that I could scarce bear to read it, and have not yet answered it. He is a good, honest fellow, and *can* write a friendly letter, which would do equal honour to his head and his heart, as a whole sheaf of his letters which I have by me will witness; and though Fame does not blow her trumpet at my approach *now* as she did *then*, when he first honoured me with his friendship, yet I am as proud as ever; and when I am laid in my grave, I wish to be stretched at my full length, that I may occupy every inch of ground I have a right to.

You would laugh were you to see me where I am just now. Would to Heaven you were here to laugh with me, though I am afraid that crying would be our first employment! Here am I set, a solitary hermit, in the solitary room of a solitary inn, with a solitary bottle of wine by me, as grave and as stupid as an owl, but, like that owl, still faithful to my old song; in confirmation of which, my dear Mrs Mac, here is your good health! May the hand-waled benisons o' Heaven bless your bonnie face; and the wratch wha skellies at your welfare, may the auld tinkler deil get him to clout his rotten heart! Amen.

You must know, my dearest madam, that these now many years, wherever I am, in whatever company, when a married lady is called as a toast, I constantly give you; but as your name has never passed my lips, even to my most intimate friend, I give you by the name of Mrs Mac. This is so well known among my acquaintances, that when any married lady is called for, the toast-master will say: 'Oh, we need not ask him who it is: here's Mrs Mac!' I have also, among my convivial friends, set on foot a round of toasts, which I call a round of Arcadian Shepherdesses—that is, a round of favourite ladies, under female names celebrated in ancient song; and then you are my Clarinda. So, my lovely Clarinda, I devote this glass of wine to a most ardent wish for your happiness.

In vain would Prudence, with decorous sneer,  
Point out a censuring world, and bid me fear:  
Above that world on wings of love I rise,  
I know its worst, and can that worst despise.

'Wronged, injured, shunned, unpitied, unredrest;  
The mocked quotation of the scorner's jest'—  
Let Prudence' direst bodements on me fall,  
Clarinda, rich reward! o'erpays them all.

I have been rhyming a little of late, but I do not know if they are worth postage.

Tell me what you think of the following monody. \* \* \* \*

The subject of the foregoing is a woman of fashion in this country, with whom at one period I was well acquainted. By some scandalous conduct to me, and two or three other gentlemen here as well

as me, she steered so far to the north of my good opinion, that I have made her the theme of several ill-natured things. The following epigram struck me the other day as I passed her carriage. \* \* \* \*

The monody was that *On a Lady famed for her Caprice*—namely, the beautiful and accomplished Mrs Walter Riddel. The epigram is a composition even less worthy of Burns, and this not merely in respect of ability, but of feeling. To have given expression to such sentiments regarding a female, even though a positive wrong had been inflicted, would have been totally indefensible; and still more astounding is it to find, that the bard could think of exhibiting such an effusion to another female. Strange that the generous heart, which never failed to have ruth on human wo, which felt even for ‘the ourie cattle and the silly sheep,’ which glowed with patriotic fire, and disdained everything like a sordid or shabby action, should have been capable of condescending to an expression of coarse and rancorous feeling against a woman, and one who had shewn him many kindnesses! But yet such was Burns—the irritable genius, as well as the humane man.<sup>1</sup>

## BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

July 1794.

Is there no news yet of Pleyel? Or is your work to be at a dead stop, until the allies set our modern Orpheus at liberty from the savage thraldom of democrat discords? Alas the day! And wo is me! That auspicious period, pregnant with the happiness of millions \* \* \* seems by no means near.

I have presented a copy of your songs to the daughter of a much-valued and much-honoured friend of mine, Mr Graham of Fintry. I wrote on the blank side of the title-page the following address to the young lady:—

Here, where the Scottish Muse immortal lives,  
In sacred strains and tuneful numbers joined,  
Accept the gift, though humble he who gives;  
Rich is the tribute of the grateful mind.

So may no ruffian feeling in thy breast,  
Discordant jar thy bosom-chords among;  
But Peace attune thy gentle soul to rest,  
Or Love ecstatic wake his seraph song:

Or Pity’s notes, in luxury of tears,  
As modest Want the tale of wo reveals;  
While conscious Virtue all the strain endears,  
And heaven-born Piety her sanction seals.

<sup>1</sup> The manuscript of the epigram in question is in the possession of Mr W. F. Watson, Princes Street, Edinburgh.

This letter contains an ironical tirade on the mishaps of Prussia in her war against France, which Dr Currie had deemed unfit for publication.

Though Burns had on several occasions, in 1793, acted on his own principle, ‘to jouk and let the jaw flee o’er,’ it is to be feared that he sometimes let himself out in this manner respecting passing events, both in conversation and in private letters. Nor can we suppose that so impetuous a spirit, which regarded the whole anti-Gallic policy of Europe as an error, leading to the destruction of men and their best interests, could have effectually chained itself up. Even the foolish fears often expressed by the conservative party of the day, and the paltriness of the means condescended to in many instances for the preservation of the country throughout the crisis, were but too apt to provoke a manly nature such as his to cry out and spare not. Being, on the other hand, little apt to think his words of great consequence, it is to be feared that he was much less cautious in the expression of his opinions than was necessary for his escaping censure. We have already had some of these escapes of political sentiment before us. Many others have survived till these times on the breath of tradition and otherwise.

In a lady’s pocket-book, he inscribed an extempore quatrain:

Grant me, indulgent Heaven, that I may live,  
To see the miscreants feel the pains they give :  
Deal Freedom’s sacred treasures free as air,  
Till slave and despot be but things which were.

More bitter was the verse which he called—

#### THE CREED OF POVERTY.

In politics if thou wouldest mix,  
And mean thy fortunes be ;  
Bear this in mind, be deaf and blind,  
Let great folks hear and see.

Burns and Syme, with a young physician named Maxwell, and several others, all latitudinarians in most respects, and all of them enemies of the system pursued by the government, held occasional symposia of a secret, or at least strictly private nature, at which they could enunciate their sentiments freely. It is said that they locked the door of their place of meeting—a circumstance which would, of course, set the popular imagination at work, and cause them to be suspected of something even worse than what they were guilty of. In antagonism to them, was a

club of Anti-Gallicans, who took upon themselves the name or the *Loyal Natives*; and it appears that one of these gentlemen ventured on one occasion to launch a political pellet at the three friends of the people. A very miserable pellet it was:—

Ye sons of sedition, give ear to my song ;  
 Let Syme, Burns, and Maxwell pervade every throng ;  
 With Craken the attorney, and Mundell the quack,  
 Send Willie the monger to hell with a smack.

This being handed across the table to Burns at one of the meetings of the disloyal corps, he instantly endorsed it with—

Ye true Loyal Natives, attend to my song,  
 In uproar and riot rejoice the night long ;  
 From envy and hatred your corps is exempt,  
 But where is your shield from the darts of contempt ?

It is far from likely that the whole of the democratic effusions of Burns have come down to us. For many years, that kind of authorship was attended with so much reproach, that men of humanity studied to conceal rather than to expose the evidence by which it could be proved against him. And even after the poor bard's death, the interests of his young family demanded of all the admirers of his name, that nothing should be brought forward which was calculated to excite a political jealousy regarding him. Hence, for many years there was a mystery observed on this subject. During that time, of course, many manuscripts might perish. As things now stand—the whole matter being looked on as only a curious piece of literary history—there can be no great objection to the publication of any piece of the kind which may have chanced to be preserved. There is one which, but for the manner in which it introduces the name of the unfortunate Louis XVI., might have now been read without any pain, as containing only the feelings of a man who looked too sanguinely upon the popular cause in France :—

#### THE TREE OF LIBERTY.

Heard ye o' the tree o' France,  
 I watna what's the name o't;  
 Around it a' the patriots dance,  
 Weel Europe kens the fame o't.

It stands where ance the Bastile stood,  
 A prison built by kings, man,  
 When Superstition's hellish brood  
 Kept France in leading-strings, man.

Upo' this tree there grows sic fruit,  
 Its virtues a' can tell, man ;  
 It raises man aboon the brute,  
 It maks him ken himsel, man.  
 Gif ance the peasant taste a bit,  
 He's greater than a lord, man,  
 And wi' the beggar shares a mite  
 O' a' he can afford, man.

This fruit is worth a' Afric's wealth,  
 To comfort us 'twas sent, man :  
 To gie the sweetest blush o' health,  
 And mak us a' content, man.  
 It clears the een, it cheers the heart,  
 Maks high and low gude friends, man ;  
 And he wha acts the traitor's part,  
 It to perdition sends, man.

My blessings aye attend the chiel,  
 Wha pitied Gallia's slaves, man,  
 And staw a branch, spite o' the deil,  
 Frae yont the western waves, man.  
 Fair Virtue watered it wi' care,  
 And now she sees wi' pride, man,  
 How weel it buds and blossoms there,  
 Its branches spreading wide, man.

But vicious folk aye hate to see  
 The works o' Virtue thrive, man ;  
 The courtly vermin's banned the tree,  
 And grat to see it thrive, man ;  
 King Loui' thought to cut it down,  
 When it was unco sma', man ;  
 For this the watchman cracked his crown,  
 Cut aff his head and a', man.

A wicked crew syne, on a time,  
 Did tak a solemn aith, man,  
 It ne'er should flourish to its prime,  
 I wat they pledged their faith, man.  
 Awa they gaed wi' mock parade,  
 Like beagles hunting game, man,  
 But soon grew weary o' the trade,  
 And wished they'd been at hame, man.

For Freedom, standing by the tree,  
 Her sons did loudly ca', man ;  
 She sang a sang o' liberty,  
 Which pleased them ane and a', man.  
 By her inspired, the new-born race  
 Soon drew the avenging steel, man ;  
 The hirelings ran—her foes gied chase,  
 And banged the despot weel, man.

Let Britain boast her hardy oak,  
 Her poplar and her pine, man,  
 Auld Britain ance could crack her joke,  
 And o'er her neighbours shine, man.  
 But seek the forest round and round,  
 And soon 'twill be agreed, man,  
 That sic a tree can not be found  
 'Twixt London and the Tweed, man.

Without this tree, alake this life  
 Is but a vale o' wo, man ;  
 A scene o' sorrow mixed wi' strife,  
 Nae real joys we know, man.  
 We labour soon, we labour late,  
 To feed the titled knave, man ;  
 And a' the comfort we're to get,  
 Is that ayont the grave, man.

Wi' plenty o' sic trees, I trow,  
 The warld would live in peace, man ;  
 The sword would help to mak a plough,  
 The din o' war wad cease, man.  
 Like brethren in a common cause,  
 We'd on each other smile, man ;  
 And equal rights and equal laws  
 Wad gladden every isle, man.

Wae worth the loon wha wadna eat  
 Sic halesome dainty cheer, man ;  
 I'd gie my shoon frae aff my feet,  
 To taste sic fruit, I swear, man.  
 Syne let us pray, auld England may  
 Sure plant this far-famed tree, man ;  
 And blithe we'll sing, and hail the day  
 That gave us liberty, man.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Originally printed in the People's Edition of Burns (1840), from a manuscript in the possession of Mr James Duncan, Mosesfield, Glasgow.

## MR THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 10th August 1794.

MY DEAR SIR—I owe you an apology for having so long delayed to acknowledge the favour of your last. I fear it will be as you say, I shall have no more songs from Pleyel till France and we are friends; but, nevertheless, I am very desirous to be prepared with the poetry; and as the season approaches in which your Muse of Coila visits you, I trust I shall, as formerly, be frequently gratified with the result of your amorous and tender interviews!

It will be found in the few ensuing pages that, as usual, Burns got into active inspiration during the autumn. He appears to have now recovered from the low spirits which beset him in the early part of the year.

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## BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

30th August 1794.

THE last evening, as I was straying out, and thinking of *O'er the Hills and far away*, I spun the following stanza for it; but whether my spinning will deserve to be laid up in store, like the precious thread of the silkworm, or brushed to the devil, like the vile manufacture of the spider, I leave, my dear sir, to your usual candid criticism. I was pleased with several lines in it at first, but I own that now it appears rather a flimsy business.

This is just a hasty sketch, until I see whether it be worth a critique. We have many sailor-songs, but as far as I at present recollect, they are mostly the effusions of the jovial sailor, not the wailings of his lovelorn mistress. I must here make one sweet exception—*Sweet Annie frae the Sea-beach came*. Now for the song:—

## ON THE SEAS AND FAR AWAY.

TUNE—*O'er the Hills, &c.*

How can my poor heart be glad,  
When absent from my sailor lad?  
How can I the thought forego,  
He's on the seas to meet the foe?  
Let me wander, let me rove,  
Still my heart is with my love:  
Nightly dreams, and thoughts by day,  
Are with him that's far away.

## CHORUS.

On the seas and far away,  
On stormy seas and far away;  
Nightly dreams, and thoughts by day,  
Are aye with him that's far away.

When in summer's noon I faint,  
 As weary flocks around me pant,  
 Haply in the scorching sun  
 My sailor's thundering at his gun :  
 Bullets, spare my only joy !  
 Bullets, spare my darling boy !  
 Fate, do with me what you may,  
 Spare but him that's far away !

At the starless midnight hour,  
 When winter rules with boundless power ;  
 As the storms the forest tear,  
 And thunders rend the howling air,  
 Listening to the doubling roar,  
 Surging on the rocky shore,  
 All I can—I weep and pray,  
 For his weal that's far away .

Peace, thy olive wand extend,  
 And bid wild war his ravage end,  
 Man with brother man to meet,  
 And as a brother kindly greet ;  
 Then may Heaven with prosperous gales,  
 Fill my sailor's welcome sails,  
 To my arms their charge convey,  
 My dear lad that's far away .

I give you leave to abuse this song, but do it in the spirit of Christian meekness.

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## MR THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 16th Sept. 1794.

MY DEAR SIR—You have anticipated my opinion of *On the Seas and far away*; I do not think it one of your very happy productions, though it certainly contains stanzas that are worthy of all acceptance.

The second is the least to my liking, particularly, ‘ Bullets, spare my only joy !’ Confound the bullets ! It might, perhaps, be objected to the third verse, ‘ At the starless midnight hour,’ that it has too much grandeur of imagery, and that greater simplicity of thought would have better suited the character of a sailor’s sweetheart. The tune, it must be remembered, is of the brisk, cheerful kind. Upon the whole, therefore, in my humble opinion, the song would be better adapted to the tune, if it consisted only of the first and last verses, with the choruses.

## BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

Sept. 1791.

I SHALL withdraw my *On the Seas and far away* altogether: it is unequal, and unworthy the work. Making a poem is like begetting a son: you cannot know whether you have a wise man or a fool, until you produce him to the world to try him.

For that reason, I send you the offspring of my brain, abortions and all; and, as such, pray look over them, and forgive them, and burn them.<sup>1</sup> I am flattered at your adopting *Ca' the Yowes to the Knowes*, as it was owing to me that ever it saw the light. About seven years ago, I was well acquainted with a worthy little fellow of a clergyman, a Mr Clunie, who sang it charmingly; and, at my request, Mr Clarke took it down from his singing. When I gave it to Johnson, I added some stanzas to the song, and mended others, but still it will not do for you. In a solitary stroll which I took to-day, I tried my hand on a few pastoral lines, following up the idea of the chorus, which I would preserve. Here it is, with all its crudities and imperfections on its head.

## CA' THE YOWES TO THE KNOWES.

## CHORUS.

Ca' the yowes to the knowes,  
Ca' them where the heather grows,  
Ca' them where the burnie rows,  
My bonnie dearie!

Hark! the mavis' evening-sang  
Sounding Cluden's woods amang;  
Then a faulding let us gang,  
My bonnie dearie.

We'll gae down by Cluden side,  
Through the hazels spreading wide,  
O'er the waves that sweetly glide  
To the moon sae clearly.

Yonder Cluden's silent towers,  
Where at moonshine midnight hours,  
O'er the dewy bending flowers,  
Fairies dance sae cheery.

<sup>1</sup> This Virgilian order of the poet should, I think, be disobeyed with respect to the song in question, the second stanza excepted.—*Note by Mr Thomson.*

Doctors differ. The objection to the second stanza does not strike the editor.—*CURRIE.*

Ghaist nor bogle shalt thou fear;  
 Thou'rt to love and heaven sae dear,  
 Nocht of ill may come thee near,  
 My bonnie dearie.

Fair and lovely as thou art,  
 Thou hast stown my very heart;  
 I can die—but canna part,  
 My bonnie dearie.

While waters wimple to the sea;  
 While day blinks in the lift sae hie;  
 Till clay-cauld death shall blin' my ee,  
 Ye shall be my dearie.

I shall give you my opinion of your other newly-adopted songs,  
 my first scribbling fit.

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## BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

•Sept. 1794

Do you know a blackguard Irish song called *Onagh's Waterfall?* Our friend Cunningham sings it delightfully. The air is charming, and I have often regretted the want of decent verses to it. It is too much, at least for my humble rustic Muse, to expect that every effort of hers shall have merit; still, I think that it is better to have mediocre verses to a favourite air, than none at all. On this principle I have all along proceeded in the *Scots Musical Museum*; and as that publication is at its last volume, I intend the following song, to the air above mentioned, for that work.

If it does not suit you as an editor, you may be pleased to have verses to it that you can sing in the company of ladies.

## SHE SAYS SHE LOES ME BEST OF A'.

TUNE—*Onagh's Lock.*

Sae flaxen were her ringlets,  
 Her eyebrows of a darker hue,  
 Bewitchingly o'er-arching  
 Twa laughing een o' bonnie blue.  
 Her smiling, sae wiling,  
 Wad make a wretch forget his wo :  
 What pleasure, what treasure,  
 Unto these rosy lips to grow :  
 Such was my Chloris' bonnie face,  
 When first her bonnie face I saw ;  
 And aye my Chloris' dearest charm,  
 She says she loes me best of a'.

Like harmony her motion ;  
 Her pretty ankle is a spy  
 Betraying fair proportion,  
 Wad make a saint forget the sky.  
 Sae warming, sae charming,  
 Her faultless form and graceful air ;  
 Ilk feature—auld nature  
 Declared that she could do nae mair.  
 Hers are the willing chains o' love,  
 By conquering beauty's sovereign law ;  
 And aye my Chloris' dearest charm,  
 She says she loes me best of a'.

Let others love the city,  
 And gaudy show at sunny noon ;  
 Gie me the lonely valley,  
 The dewy eve, and rising moon  
 Fair beaming, and streaming,  
 Her silver light the boughs amang ;  
 While falling, recalling,  
 The amorous thrush concludes his sang :  
 There, dearest Chloris, wilt thou rove  
 By wimpling burn and leafy shaw,  
 And hear my vows o' truth and love,  
 And say thou loes me best of a'.

Not to compare small things with great, my taste in music is like the mighty Frederick of Prussia's taste in painting: we are told that he frequently admired what the connoisseurs decried, and always without any hypocrisy confessed his admiration. I am sensible that my taste in music must be inelegant and vulgar, because people of undisputed and cultivated taste can find no merit in my favourite tunes. Still, because I am cheaply pleased, is that any reason why I should deny myself that pleasure? Many of our strathspeys, ancient and modern, give me most exquisite enjoyment, where you and other judges would probably be shewing disgust. For instance, I am just now making verses for *Rothemurchie's Rant*, an air which puts me in raptures; and, in fact, unless I be pleased with the tune, I never can make verses to it. Here I have Clarke on my side, who is a judge that I will pit against any of you. *Rothemurchie*, he says, 'is an air both original and beautiful ;' and on his recommendation I have taken the first part of the tune for a chorus, and the fourth or last part for the song. I am but two stanzas deep in the work, and possibly you may think, and justly, that the poetry is as little worth your attention as the music.

[These stanzas will be found afterwards in the complete song.]

I have begun anew, *Let me in this ae Night*. Do you think that we ought to retain the old chorus? I think we must retain both the old

chorus and the first stanza of the old song. I do not altogether like the third line of the first stanza, but cannot alter it to please myself. I am just three stanzas deep in it. Would you have the *dénouement* to be successful or otherwise?—should she ‘let him in’ or not?

Did you not once propose *The Sow's Tail to Geordie* as an air for your work? I am quite delighted with it; but I acknowledge, that is no mark of its real excellence. I once set about verses for it, which I meant to be in the alternate way of a lover and his mistress chanting together. I have not the pleasure of knowing Mrs Thomson's Christian name, and yours, I am afraid, is rather burlesque for sentiment, else I had meant to have made you [two] the hero and heroine of the little piece.

How do you like the following epigram, which I wrote the other day on a lovely young girl's recovery from a fever? Dr Maxwell was the physician who seemingly saved her from the grave; and to him I address the following:—

TO DR MAXWELL,

ON MISS JESSIE STAIG'S RECOVERY.

Maxwell, if merit here you crave,  
That merit I deny:  
You save fair Jessy from the grave!—  
An angel could not die!

u patience with this stupid epistle!

MR THOMSON TO BURNS.

I PERCEIVE the sprightly Muse is now attendant upon her favourite poet, whose wood-notes wild are become as enchanting as ever. *She says she loves me best of all* is one of the pleasantest table-songs I have seen, and henceforth shall be mine when the song is going round. I'll give Cunningham a copy; he can more powerfully proclaim its merit. I am far from undervaluing your taste for the strathspey music; on the contrary, I think it highly animating and agreeable, and that some of the strathspeys, when graced with such verses as yours, will make very pleasing songs, in the same way that rough Christians are tempered and softened by lovely woman, without whom, you know, they had been brutes.

I am clear for having the *Sow's Tail*, particularly as your proposed verses to it are so extremely promising. Geordie, as you observe, is a name only fit for burlesque composition. Mrs Thomson's name (Katharine) is not at all poetical. Retain Jeanie, therefore, and make the other Jamie, or any other that sounds agreeably.

Your *Ca' the Ewes* is a precious little morsel. Indeed, I am perfectly astonished and charmed with the endless variety of your

fancy. Here let me ask you, whether you never seriously turned your thoughts upon dramatic writing? That is a field worthy of your genius, in which it might shine forth in all its splendour. One or two successful pieces upon the London stage would make your fortune. The rage at present is for musical dramas: few or none of those which have appeared since the *Duenna* possess much poetical merit; there is little in the conduct of the fable, or in the dialogue, to interest the audience: they are chiefly vehicles for music and pageantry. I think you might produce a comic opera in three acts, which would live by the poetry, at the same time that it would be proper to take every assistance from her tuneful sister. Part of the songs, of course, would be to our favourite Scottish airs; the rest might be left to the London composer—*Storace* for Drury Lane, or *Shield* for Covent Garden, both of them very able and popular musicians. I believe that interest and manœuvring are often necessary to have a drama brought on; so it may be with the namby-pamby tribe of flowery scribblers: but were you to address Mr Sheridan himself by letter, and send him a dramatic piece, I am persuaded he would, for the honour of genius, give it a fair and candid trial. Excuse me for obtruding these hints upon your consideration.

With reference to the suggestion here made by Mr Thomson, Dr Currie says that our bard had previously received the same advice, and had certainly gone so far as to cast about for a subject.

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## MR THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 14th Oct. 1794.

THE last eight days have been devoted to the re-examination of the Scottish collections. I have read, and sung, and fiddled, and considered, till I am half blind, and wholly stupid. The few airs I have added are enclosed.

Peter Pindar has at length sent me all the songs I expected from him, which are, in general, elegant and beautiful. Have you heard of a London collection of Scottish airs and songs, just published by Mr Ritson, an Englishman? I shall send you a copy. His introductory essay on the subject is curious, and evinces great reading and research, but does not decide the question as to the origin of our melodies; though he shews clearly that Mr Tytler, in his ingenious dissertation, has adduced no sort of proof of the hypothesis he wished to establish, and that his classification of the airs according to the eras when they were composed, is mere fancy and conjecture. On John Pinkerton, Esq., he has no mercy, but consigns him to damnation. He snarls at my publication, on the score of Pindar being engaged to write songs for it; uncandidly and unjustly leaving

it to be inferred, that the songs of Scottish writers had been sent a packing to make room for Peter's! Of you he speaks with some respect, but gives you a passing hit or two for daring to dress up a little some old foolish songs for the *Museum*. His sets of the Scottish airs are taken, he says, from the oldest collections and best authorities : many of them, however, have such a strange aspect, and are so unlike the sets which are sung by every person of taste, old or young, in town or country, that we can scarcely recognise the features of our favourites. By going to the oldest collections of our music, it does not follow that we find the melodies in their original state. These melodies had been preserved, we know not how long, by oral communication, before being collected and printed ; and as different persons sing the same air very differently, according to their accurate or confused recollection of it, so, even supposing the first collectors to possess the industry, taste, and discernment to choose the best they could hear—which is far from certain—still it must evidently be a chance whether the collections exhibit any of the melodies in the state they were first composed. In selecting the melodies for my own collection, I have been as much guided by the living as by the dead. Where these differed, I preferred the sets that appeared to me the most simple and beautiful, and the most generally approved : and without meaning any compliment to my own capability of choosing, or speaking of the pains I have taken, I flatter myself that my sets will be found equally free from vulgar errors on the one hand, and affected graces on the other.

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BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

19th October 1794.

MY DEAR FRIEND—By this morning's post I have your list, and, in general, I highly approve of it. I shall, at more leisure, give you a critique on the whole. Clarke goes to your town by to-day's fly, and I wish you would call on him, and take his opinion in general : you know his taste is a standard. He will return here again in a week or two, so please do not miss asking for him. One thing I hope he will do, which would give me high satisfaction—persuade you to adopt my favourite, *Craigieburn Wood*, in your selection : it is as great a favourite of his as of mine. The lady on whom it was made is one of the finest women in Scotland ; and, in fact (*entre nous*), is in a manner to me what Sterne's Eliza was to him—a mistress, or friend, or what you will, in the guileless simplicity of Platonic love. (Now, don't put any of your squinting constructions on this, or have any clishmaclaver about it among our acquaintances.) I assure you, that to my lovely friend you are indebted for many of your best songs of mine. Do you think that the sober, gin-horse routine of existence could inspire a man with life, and love, and joy—could fire him with enthusiasm, or melt him with pathos, equal to

the genius of your book? No—no! Whenever I want to be more than ordinary in song—to be in some degree equal to your diviner airs—do you imagine I fast and pray for the celestial emanation? *Tout au contraire!* I have a glorious recipe; the very one that for his own use was invented by the divinity of healing and poetry, when erst he piped to the flocks of Admetus. I put myself in a regimen of admiring a fine woman; and, in proportion to the adorability of her charms, in proportion you are delighted with my verses. The lightning of her eye is the godhead of Parnassus, and the witchery of her smile the divinity of Helicon!

To descend to the business with which I began: if you like my idea of *When she cam ben she bobbit*, the following stanzas of mine, altered a little from what they were formerly, when set to another air, may perhaps do instead of worse stanzas:—

#### SAW YE MY PHELY?

TUNE—*When she cam ben she bobbit.*

Oh, saw ye my dear, my Phely?  
 Oh, saw ye my dear, my Phely?  
 She's down i' the grove, she's wi' a new love,  
 She winna come hame to her Willy.

What says she, my dearest, my Phely?  
 What says she, my dearest, my Phely?  
 She lets thee to wit, that she has thee forgot,  
 And for ever disowns thee, her Willy.

Oh, had I ne'er seen thee, my Phely!  
 Oh, had I ne'er seen thee, my Phely!  
 As light as the air, and fause as thou's fair,  
 Thou's broken the heart o' thy Willy.

Now for a few miscellaneous remarks. *The Posie* (in the *Museum*) is my composition; the air was taken down from Mrs Burns's voice.<sup>1</sup> It is well known in the west country, but the old words are trash. By the by, take a look at the tune again, and tell me if you do not think it is the original from which *Roslin Castle* is composed. The second part, in particular, for the first two or three bars, is exactly the old air. *Strathallan's Lament* is mine; the music is by our right trusty and deservedly well-beloved Allan Masterton. *Donocht-Head* is not mine; I would give ten pounds it were. It appeared first in the *Edinburgh Herald*, and came to the editor of that paper

<sup>1</sup> This, and the other poems of which he speaks, had appeared in *Johnson's Museum*, and Mr T. had inquired whether they were our bard's.—CURRIE.

with the Newcastle post-mark on it.<sup>1</sup> *Whistle o'er the Lave o't* is mine: the music said to be by a John Bruce, a celebrated violin-player in Dumfries, about the beginning of this century. This I know—Bruce, who was an honest man, though a red-wud Highland-man, constantly claimed it; and by the old musical people here, is believed to be the author of it.

*Andrew and his cutty Gun*.—The song to which this is set in the *Museum* is mine, and was composed on Miss Euphemia Murray, of Lintrose, commonly and deservedly called The Flower of Strathmore.

*How long and dreary is the Night!*—I met with some such words in a collection of songs somewhere, which I altered and enlarged; and to please you, and to suit your favourite air, I have taken a stride or two across my room, and have arranged it anew, as you will find on the other page.

<sup>1</sup> The reader will be curious to see this poem, so highly praised by Burns. Here it is:—

“Keen blows the wind o'er Donocht-Head,<sup>1</sup>  
The snaw drives snelly through the dale,

The gaberlunzie tirls my sneck,  
And, shivering, tells his wae fu' tale.

“Cauld is the night, oh, let me in,  
And dinna let your minstrel fa',  
And dinna let his winding-sheet  
Be naething but a wreath o' snaw.

“Full ninety winters hae I seen,  
And piped where gor-cocks whirring flew,

And mony a day I've danced, I ween,  
To tilts which from my drone I blew.”

My Eppie waked, and soon she cried:  
“Get up, guidman, and let him in;  
For weel ye ken the winter night  
Was short when he began his din.”

My Eppie's voice, oh, wow it's sweet,  
Even though she bans and scalds a wee;

But when it's tuned to sorrow's tale,  
Oh, haith, it's doubly dear to me!

“Come in, auld carl, I'll steer my fire,  
I'll make it bleeze a bonnie flame;  
Your bluid is thin, ye've tint the gate,  
Ye shouldna stray sae far frae hame.”

“Nae hame have I,” the minstrel said;  
“Sad party-strife o'erturned my ha’;

And, weeping at the eve of life,  
I wander through a wreath o' snaw.”

This affecting poem is apparently incomplete. The author need not be ashamed to own himself. It is worthy of Burns, or of Macneill.—CURRIE. [It was written by a gentleman of Newcastle, named Pickering.]

## HOW LONG AND DREARY IS THE NIGHT!

TUNE—*Cauld Kail in Aberdeen.*

How long and dreary is the night  
 When I am frae my dearie!  
 I restless lie frae e'en to morn,  
 Though I were ne'er sae weary.

## CHORUS.

For oh, her lanely nights are lang !  
 And oh, her dreams are eerie!  
 And oh, her widowed heart is sair,  
 That's absent frae her dearie!

When I think on the lightsome days  
 I spent wi' thee, my dearie,  
 And now what seas between us roar,  
 How can I be but eerie ?

How slow ye move, ye heavy hours !  
 The joyless day, how dreary !  
 It was na sae ye glinted by,  
 When I was wi' my dearie !

Tell me how you like this. I differ from your idea of the expression of the tune. There is, to me, a great deal of tenderness in it. You cannot, in my opinion, dispense with a bass to your addenda airs. A lady of my acquaintance, a noted performer, plays *Nae Luck about the House*, and sings it at the same time so charmingly, that I shall never bear to see any of her songs sent into the world, as naked as Mr What-d'yecall-um has done in his London collection.<sup>1</sup>

These English songs gravel me to death. I have not that command of the language that I have of my native tongue. In fact, I think my ideas are more barren in English than in Scotch. I have been at *Duncan Gray*, to dress it in English, but all I can do is deplorably stupid. For instance:—

## LET NOT WOMAN E'ER COMPLAIN.

TUNE—*Duncan Gray.*

Let not woman e'er complain  
 Of inconstancy in love ;  
 Let not woman e'er complain  
 Fickle man is apt to rove :

<sup>1</sup> Mr Ritson.

Look abroad through Nature's range,  
 Nature's mighty law is change;  
 Ladies, would it not be strange,  
 Man should then a monster prove?

Mark the winds, and mark the skies;  
 Ocean's ebb, and ocean's flow:  
 Sun and moon but set to rise,  
 Round and round the seasons go.

Why, then, ask of silly man  
 To oppose great Nature's plan?  
 We'll be constant while we can—  
 You can be no more, you know.

Since the above, I have been out in the country taking a dinner with a friend, where I met with the lady whom I mentioned in the second page in this odds-and-ends of a letter.<sup>1</sup> As usual, I got into song; and returning home, I composed the following:—

#### THE LOVER'S MORNING SALUTE TO HIS MISTRESS.

TUNE—*Deil tak the Wars.*

Sleep'st thou, or wak'st thou, fairest creature?  
 Rosy Morn now lifts his eye,  
 Numbering ilka bud which nature  
 Waters wi' the tears o' joy:  
 Now through the leafy woods,  
 And by the reeking floods,  
 Wild nature's tenants freely, gladly stray;  
 The lintwhite in his bower  
 Chants o'er the breathing flower;  
 The lav'rock to the sky  
 Ascends wi' sangs o' joy,  
 While the sun and thou arise to bless the day.

Phœbus gilding the brow o' morning,  
 Banishes ilk darksome shade,  
 Nature gladd'ning and adorning;  
 Such to me my lovely maid.  
 When absent frae my fair,  
 The murky shades o' care

<sup>1</sup> An account of this lady is given a few pages onward.

With starless gloom o'ercast my sullen sky;  
 But when in beauty's light,  
 She meets my ravished sight,  
 When through my very heart  
 Her beaming glories dart—  
 'Tis then I wake to life, to light, and joy!<sup>1</sup>

If you honour my verses by setting the air to them, I will vamp up the old song, and make it English enough to be understood.

I enclose you a musical curiosity, an East Indian air, which you would swear was a Scottish one. I know the authenticity of it, as the gentleman who brought it over is a particular acquaintance of mine. Do preserve me the copy I send you, as it is the only one I have. Clarke has set a bass to it, and I intend putting it into the *Musical Museum*. Here follow the verses I intend for it:—

#### THE AULD MAN.

But lately seen in gladsome green,  
 The woods rejoiced the day ;  
 Through gentle showers the laughing flowers  
 In double pride were gay :  
 But now our joys are fled  
 On winter blasts awa !  
 Yet maiden May, in rich array,  
 Again shall bring them a'.

But my white pow, nae kindly thow'e	head
Shall melt the snaws of age ;	
My trunk of eild, but buss or beild,	senility
Sinks in Time's wintry rage.	without
Oh, age has weary days,	
And nights o' sleepless pain !	
Thou golden time o' youthful prime,	
Why com'st thou not again ?	

#### <sup>1</sup> Variation:—

Now to the streaming fountain,  
 Or up the heathy mountain,  
 The hart, hind, and roe, freely, wildly-wanton stray ;  
 In twining hazel bowers  
 His lay the linnet pours ;  
 The lav'rock to the sky  
 Ascends wi' sangs o' joy,  
 While the sun and thou arise to bless the day.

When frae my Chloris parted,  
 Sad, cheerless, broken-hearted,  
 The night's gloomy shades, cloudy, dark, o'ercast my sky :  
 But when she charms my sight,  
 In pride of beauty's light ;  
 When through my very heart  
 Her beaming glories dart—  
 'Tis then, 'tis then I walke to life and joy!—CURRIE.

I would be obliged to you, if you would procure me a sight of Ritson's collection of English songs which you mention in your letter. I will thank you for another information, and that as speedily as you please: whether this miserable, drawling, hotch-potch epistle has not completely tired you of my correspondence?

The story of the Chloris of Burns is not much less romantic than that of Clarinda. At the time when the poet came to Ellisland, Mr William Lorimer, a substantial farmer, planted himself at Kemmis-hall, on the opposite side of the Nith, about two miles nearer Dumfries. Mr Lorimer had realised some wealth in consequence of an extremely favourable lease, and he now, in addition to farming, carried on extensive mercantile transactions in Dumfries and at Kemmis-hall. It was in consequence of his dealing in teas and spirits that he fell under the attention of the poet, who then protected the revenue interests in ten parishes. Burns became intimate with the Lorimers. They scarcely ever had company at their house, without inviting him: they often sent him delicacies from their farm; and whenever he passed their way on his professional tours, Mrs Lorimer was delighted to minister to his comforts with a basin of tea, or whatever else he might please to have. A daughter of the family recollects seeing many letters of his addressed to her father: one contained only the words, 'Coming, sir;' a quaint answer, probably, to some friendly note of invitation. No fiscal visitor was ever so liked as he; but then, he was the most good-natured of such visitors—of which one little circumstance, recollected by the person above mentioned, may be sufficient proof. Having arrived one evening, and without Mrs Lorimer's knowledge, put up his horse in the stable, he came in by the back entrance, and so into the kitchen, where the lady was busy in the preparation of a considerable quantity of candles for home consumption—candles being then an excisable article. He looked not—he stopped not—but only remarking: 'Faith, ma'am, you're thrang to-night,' passed hastily on to the parlour.

Mr Lorimer's eldest daughter Jean was at this time a very young lady, but possessed of uncommon personal charms. Her form was symmetry itself, and, notwithstanding hair of flaxen lightness, the beauty of her face was universally admired. A Mr Gillespie, a brother-officer of Burns, settled at Dumfries, was already enslaved by Miss Lorimer; and to his suit the poet lent all his influence. But it was in vain. Miss Lorimer became the wife of another, under somewhat extraordinary circumstances. A young gentleman named Whelpdale, connected with the county of Cumberland, and who had already

signalised himself by profuse habits, settled at Barnhill, near Moffat, as a farmer. He was acquainted with a respectable family named Johnston at Drumcrieff, near Craigieburn, where Miss Lorimer visited. He thus became acquainted with the young beauty. He paid his addresses to her, and it is supposed that she was not adverse to his suit. One night, in March 1793, when the poor girl was still some months less than eighteen years of age, and of course possessed of little prudence or knowledge of the world, he took her aside, and informed her that he could no longer live except as her husband; he therefore entreated her to elope with him that very night to Gretna Green, in order that they might be married, and threatened to do himself some extreme mischief if she should refuse. A hard-wrung consent to this most imprudent step fixed her fate to sorrow for life. The pair had not been united for many months, when Mr Whelpdale was obliged by his debts to remove hastily from Barnhill, leaving his young wife no resource but that of returning to her parents at Kemmis-hall. She saw her husband no more for twenty-three years!

Though Burns had now removed to Dumfries, his intimacy with the Kemmis-hall family was kept up—and, let it be remarked, he was not intimate with them merely as an individual, but as the head of a family, for his wife was as much the friend and associate of the Lorimers as himself, though perhaps less frequently at their house. When Jean returned thither in her worse than widowed state, she was still under nineteen, and in the full blaze of her uncommon beauty. It was now that she fell more particularly under the notice of the Ayrshire poet. She became his poetical divinity under the appellation of Chloris—a ridiculous appellative of the pastoral poets of a past age, but which, somehow, does not appear ridiculous in the verse of Burns. He is found in September 1794—at which time she was exactly nineteen—beginning to celebrate her in the series of songs of which two or three have already been introduced. With the feelings of the poetical admirer, there appear to have been mingled the compassionate tenderness due to the hapless fate of his young heroine. Such a feeling he expressed in his best style in an inscription on a book presented to her.

## TO CHLORIS.

"Tis Friendship's pledge, my young, fair friend,  
Nor thou the gift refuse,  
Nor with unwilling ear attend  
The moralising Muse.

Since thou, in all thy youth and charms,  
 Must bid the world adieu,  
 (A world 'gainst peace in constant arms)  
 To join the friendly few :

Since thy gay morn of life o'ercast,  
 Chill came the tempest's lower ;  
 (And ne'er misfortune's eastern blast  
 Did nip a fairer flower :)

Since life's gay scenes must charm no more ;  
 Still much is left behind ;  
 Still nobler wealth hast thou in store—  
 The comforts of the mind !

Thine is the self-approving glow,  
 On conscious honour's part ;  
 And, dearest gift of Heaven below,  
 Thine friendship's truest heart.

The joys refined of sense and taste,  
 With every Muse to rove :  
 And doubly were the poet blest,  
 These joys could he improve.

We shall see that during the whole of this autumn and winter, Burns was in the full glow of poetical worship towards Mrs Whelpdale, till he had celebrated her charms in no fewer than eleven songs, some of which are amongst the happiest of his compositions. The case was literally as he himself states it. Fascinated by the beauty of this young creature, he erected her as the goddess of his inspiration, at the same time that respect for her intelligence and pity for her misfortunes were sufficient, supposing the absence of other restraints, to debar all unholier thoughts.

The subsequent history of the lady is pitiful. Some years after this outpouring of poesy in her praise, her father was unfortunate in business, and ceased to be the wealthy man he once was. The tuneful tongue which had sung her praise was laid in silence in Dumfries church-yard. She continued to derive no income from her husband, and scarcely even to know in what part of the world he lived. She was now, therefore, compelled to accept of a situation as plain governess in a gentleman's family; and in such situations she passed some years of her life. In 1816, returning from a visit to her brother in Sunderland, she inquired at Brampton for her husband, and learned that she had only missed seeing him by a few hours, as he had that day been in the village. He was now squandering some fourth or fifth fortune, which

had been left to him by a relation. Not long after, learning that he was imprisoned for debt at Carlisle, she went to see him. Having announced to him her wish for an interview, she went to the place where he was confined, and was desired to walk in. His lodging was pointed out to her on the opposite side of a quadrangle, round which there was a covered walk, as in the ambulatories of the ancient religious houses. As she walked along one side of this court, she passed a man whose back was towards her—a bulky-looking person, slightly paralytic, and who shuffled in walking, as from lameness. As she approached the door, she heard this man pronounce her name. ‘Jean!’ he said, and then immediately added, as under a more formal feeling, ‘Mrs Whelpdale!’ It was her husband—the gay youth of 1793 being now transformed into a broken-down middle-aged man, whom she had passed without even suspecting who he was. The wife had to ask the figure if he was her husband, and the figure answered that he was. To such a scene may a romantic marriage lead! There was kindness, nevertheless, between the long-separated pair. Jean spent a month in Carlisle, calling upon her husband every day, and then returned to Scotland. Some months afterwards, when he had been liberated, she paid him another visit; but his utter inability to make a prudent use of any money intrusted to him, rendered it quite impossible that they should ever renew their conjugal life. After this, she never saw him again.

It is understood that this poor, unprotected woman at length was led into an error which lost her the respect of society. She spent some time in a kind of vagrant life, verging on mendicancy, and never rising above the condition of a domestic servant. She never ceased to be elegant in her form and comely of face; nor did she ever cease to recollect that she had been the subject of some dozen compositions by one of the greatest modern masters of the lyre. About the year 1825, a benevolent gentleman, to whom she had made her penury known, bestirred himself in her behalf, and represented her case in the public prints, with the hope of drawing forth a little money for her relief. His wife, having sent her some newspapers containing the paragraphs which he had written, received the following note, in which we cannot help thinking there is something not unworthy of a poetical heroine:—

‘Burns’s Chloris is infinitely obliged to Mrs — for her kind attention in sending the newspapers, and feels pleased and flattered by having so much said and done in her behalf.

Ruth was kindly and generously treated by Boaz; perhaps Burns’s Chloris may enjoy a similar fate in the fields of men of talent and worth.

March 2, 1825,

The lady here addressed saw Mrs Whelpdale several times, and was pleased with her conversation, which shewed considerable native acuteness of understanding, and a play of wit such as might have been supposed to charm a high intellect in one of the opposite sex. Afterwards, our heroine obtained a situation as housekeeper with a gentleman residing in Newington, and there she lived for some time in the enjoyment, she said, of greater comfort than she had known since she first left her father's house. But a pulmonary affection of a severe nature gradually undermined her health, and she was ultimately obliged to retire to a humble lodging in Middleton's Entry, Potterrow, near the place where Burns had first met with Clarinda. Here she lingered for some time in great suffering, being chiefly supported by her late master; and here, in September 1831, she breathed her last. Her remains were interred in Newington burying-ground. Her husband, who latterly lived at Langholm, in Dumfriesshire, on a small pension, survived her three or four years.

Poor Chloris is a sad memento of the evils which spring to woman from one rash step in what is, for that sex, the most important movement in life. Life was to her clouded in its morn: every grace that Heaven gives to make woman a charm and a solace to man, was possessed in vain; all through this false step, taken, though it was, at a time when she could scarcely be considered as responsible for her own actions.

In an inedited passage of the last letter, our passion-swayed poet alludes to Clarinda, as 'a *ci-devant* goddess of mine!' It was right, even in these poetico-Platonic affairs, to be off with the old love before he was on with the new. Yet it was only four months before, only in June, that she was 'my ever-dearest Clarinda!' And a letter of friendship was then too cold to be attempted. Oh woman-kind, think of that when you are addressed otherwise than in the language of sober common-sense! So lately as June, 'my ever-dearest,' and now only 'a *ci-devant* goddess!'

We turn to lighter matters.

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TO MR PETER HILL, EDINBURGH.

[DUMFRIES, end of October 1794?]

MY DEAR HILL—By a carrier of yesterday, Henry Osborn by name, I sent you a kippered salmon,<sup>1</sup> which I trust you will duly receive, and which I also trust will give you many a toothful of

<sup>1</sup> A salmon cut up and dried in the smoke of the chimney—a favourite breakfast relish in Scotland.

satisfaction. If you have the confidence to say, that there is anything of the kind in all your great city superior to this in true kipper relish and flavour, I will be revenged by—not sending you another next season. In return, the first party of friends that dine with you—provided that your fellow-travellers and my trusty and well-beloved veterans in intimacy, Messrs Ramsay and Cameron,<sup>1</sup> be of the party—about that time in the afternoon when a relish or devil becomes grateful, give them two or three slices of the kipper, and drink a bumper to your friends in Dumfries. Moreover, by last Saturday's fly, I sent you a hare, which I hope came, and carriage-free, safe to your hospitable mansion and social table. So much for business.

How do you like the following pastoral, which I wrote the other day, for a tune that I daresay you well know?

[Follows the song, *Ca' the Yowes to the Knowes.*]

And how do you like the following?—

ON SEEING MRS KEMBLE IN YARICO.

Kemble, thou cur'st my unbelieff  
Of Moses and his rod;  
At Yarico's sweet notes of grief  
The rock with tears had flow'd.<sup>2</sup>

Or this?—

ON W—— R——, ESQ.

So vile was poor Wat, such a miscreant slave,  
That the worms even damned him when laid in his grave;  
'In his skull there is famine!' a starved reptile cries;  
'And his heart it is poison!' another replies.

My best good-wishes to Mrs Hill, and believe me to be, ever  
yours,

R. BURNS.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr Ramsay was printer of that venerable journal, the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, which still partly belongs to his family. Mr Cameron was a paper manufacturer. These two gentlemen seem to have recently been at Dumfries, along with Mr Hill, on which occasion there would of course be a merry-meeting with Burns.

<sup>2</sup> 'On Friday last, our theatre received a great acquisition in the favourite opera of *Inkle and Yarico*, by the first appearance of Mrs Kemble, in the amiable and interesting character of Yarico. Her excellent performance of that character has been the subject of high panegyric. We can only join our tribute to her established reputation, by observing that her delineations were striking, natural, and affecting, and commanded the attention and applause of an elegant audience. The farce was *Animal Magnetism, &c.*'—*Dumfries Journal*, Oct. 21, 1794. The actress in question was the wife of Mr Stephen Kemble, a senior brother in a family which has given at least three distinguished ornaments to the British stage. Mr S. Kemble composed a very pleasing song on the occasion of the death of Burns.

<sup>3</sup> This letter appeared in the *Knickerbocker* (New York Magazine) for September 1848. On another copy of the epigram on Mrs Kemble, it appears that the performance of *Inkle and Yarico* which Burns witnessed, took place on the 24th of October 1794.

## MR THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 27th October 1794.

I AM sensible, my dear friend, that a genuine poet can no more exist without his mistress than his meat. I wish I knew the adorable she, whose bright eyes and witching smiles have so often enraptured the Scottish bard, that I might drink her sweet health when the toast is going round. *Craigieburn Wood* must certainly be adopted into my family, since she is the object of the song; but, in the name of decency, I must beg a new chorus-verse from you. *O to be lying beyond thee, dearie*, is perhaps a consummation to be wished, but will not do for singing in the company of ladies. The songs in your last will do you lasting credit, and suit the respective airs charmingly. I am perfectly of your opinion with respect to the additional airs. The idea of sending them into the world naked as they were born, was ungenerous. They must all be clothed, and made decent by our friend Clarke.

I find I am anticipated by the friendly Cunningham in sending you Ritson's Scottish collection. Permit me, therefore, to present you with his English collection, which you will receive by the coach. I do not find his historical essay on Scottish song interesting. Your anecdotes and miscellaneous remarks will, I am sure, be much more so. Allan has just sketched a charming design from *Maggie Lauder*. She is dancing with such spirit as to electrify the piper, who seems almost dancing too, while he is playing with the most exquisite glee. I am much inclined to get a small copy, and to have it engraved in the style of Ritson's prints.

P.S.—Pray, what do your anecdotes say concerning *Maggie Lauder*?—was she a real personage, and of what rank? You would surely speer for her, if you ca'd at Anster town.

## BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

November 1794.

MANY thanks to you, my dear sir, for your present; it is a book of the utmost importance to me. I have yesterday begun my cœdotes, &c. for your work. I intend drawing them up in the form of a letter to you, which will save me from the tedious, dull business of systematic arrangement. Indeed, as all I have to say consists of unconnected remarks, anecdotes, scraps of old songs, &c. it would be impossible to give the work a beginning, a middle, and an end, which the critics insist to be absolutely necessary in a work. In my last, I told you my objections to the song you had selected for *My Lodging is on the cold Ground*. On my visit the other day to my fair Chloris—that is the poetic name of the lovely goddess of my inspiration—she suggested an idea, which I, on my return from the visit, wrought into the following song:—

## MY CHLORIS, MARK HOW GREEN THE GROVES.

TUNE—*My Lodging is on the cold Ground.*

My Chloris, mark how green the groves,  
The primrose banks how fair;  
The balmy gales awake the flowers,  
And wave thy flaxen hair.

The lav'rock shuns the palace gay,  
And o'er the cottage sings:  
For nature smiles as sweet, I ween,  
To shepherds as to kings.

Let minstrels sweep the skilfu' string  
In lordly lighted ha':  
The shepherd stops his simple reed,  
Blithe, in the birken shaw.

The princely revel may survey  
Our rustic dance wi' scorn;  
But are their hearts as light as ours  
Beneath the milk-white thorn?

The shepherd, in the flowery glen,  
In shepherd's phrase will woo:  
The courtier tells a finer tale,  
But is his heart as true?

These wild-wood flowers I've pu'd, to deck  
That spotless breast o' thine:  
The courtier's gems may witness love—  
But 'tis na love like mine.

How do you like the simplicity and tenderness of this pastoral? I think it pretty well.

I like you for entering so candidly and so kindly into the story of '*ma chere amie.*' I assure you, I was never more in earnest in my life, than in the account of that affair which I sent you in my last. Conjugal love is a passion which I deeply feel and highly venerate; but, somehow, it does not make such a figure in poesy as that other species of the passion—

Where love is liberty, and nature law.

Musically speaking, the first is an instrument of which the gamut is scanty and confined, but the tones inexpressibly sweet, while the last has powers equal to all the intellectual modulations of the human soul. Still, I am a very poet in my enthusiasm of the passion. The welfare and happiness of the beloved object is the first and inviolate

sentiment that pervades my soul; and whatever pleasures I might wish for, or whatever might be the raptures they would give me, yet, if they interfere with that first principle, it is having these pleasures at a dishonest price; and justice forbids, and generosity disdains, the purchase! . . . .

Despairing of my own powers to give you variety enough in English songs, I have been turning over old collections, to pick out songs, of which the measure is something similar to what I want; and, with a little alteration, so as to suit the rhythm of the air exactly, to give you them for your work. Where the songs have hitherto been but little noticed, nor have ever been set to music, I think the shift a fair one. A song which, under the same first verse, you will find in Ramsay’s *Tea-table Miscellany*, I have cut down for an English dress to your *Dainty Davie*, as follows:—

#### IT WAS THE CHARMING MONTH OF MAY.

TUNE—*Dainty Davie*.

It was the charming month of May,  
When all the flowers were fresh and gay,  
One morning, by the break of day,  
    The youthful, charming Chloe;  
From peaceful slumber she arose,  
Girt on her mantle and her hose,  
And o’er the flowery mead she goes,  
    The youthful, charming Chloe.

#### CHORUS.

Lovely was she by the dawn,  
    Youthful Chloe, charming Chloe,  
Tripping o’er the pearly lawn,  
    The youthful, charming Chloe.

The feathered people, you might see  
Perched all around on every tree,  
In notes of sweetest melody  
    They hail the charming Chloe;  
Till, painting gay the eastern skies,  
The glorious sun began to rise,  
Out-rivalled by the radiant eyes  
    Of youthful, charming Chloe.

You may think meanly of this, but take a look at the bombast original, and you will be surprised that I have made so much of it. I have finished my song to *Rothemurchie’s Rant*, and you have Clarke to consult as to the set of the air for singing.

## LASSIE WI' THE LINT-WHITE LOCKS.

TUNE—*Rothemurchie's Rant.*

## CHORUS.

Lassie wi' the lint-white locks,  
 Bonnie lassie, artless lassie,  
 Wilt thou wi' me tent the flocks,  
 Wilt thou be my dearie O?

Now Nature cleeds the flowery lea,  
 And a' is young and sweet like thee:  
 Oh, wilt thou share its joys wi' me,  
 And say thou'l be my dearie O?

And when the welcome simmer-shower  
 Has cheered ilk drooping little flower,  
 We'll to the breathing woodbine bower  
 At sultry noon, my dearie O.

When Cynthia lights, wi' silver ray,  
 The weary shearer's hameward way,  
 Through yellow waving fields we'll stray,  
 And talk o' love, my dearie O.

And when the howling wintry blast  
 Disturbs my lassie's midnight rest,  
 Enclasped to my faithful breast,  
 I'll comfort thee, my dearie O.

This piece has at least the merit of being a regular pastoral: the vernal morn, the summer noon, the autumnal evening, and the winter night, are regularly rounded. If you like it, well; if not, I will insert it in the *Museum*.

I am out of temper that you should set so sweet, so tender an air, as *Deil tak the Wars*, to the foolish old verses. You talk of the silliness of *Saw ye my Father?*<sup>1</sup>—By Heavens! the odds is gold to brass! Besides, the old song, though now pretty well modernised into the Scottish language, is originally, and in the early editions, a bungling low imitation of the Scottish manner, by that genius Tom D'Urfey, so has no pretensions to be a Scottish production. There is a pretty English song by Sheridan, in the *Duenna*, to this air, which is out of sight superior to D'Urfey's. It begins—

When sable night each drooping plant restoring.

The air, if I understand the expression of it properly, is the very

<sup>1</sup> Mr Thomson must have completely misunderstood the character of this old song. It is a most romantic one, clothed in highly poetical language.

native language of simplicity, tenderness, and love. I have again gone over my song to the tune as follows.

[Here Burns transcribes his new version of *Sleep'st thou, or Wak'st thou?* containing the slight variations which have already been given.]

Now for my English song to *Nancy's to the Greenwood, &c.*

FAREWELL, THOU STREAM THAT WINDING FLOWS.

Farewell, thou stream that winding flows  
 Around Eliza's dwelling!  
 O mem'ry! spare the cruel throes  
 Within my bosom swelling:  
 Condemned to drag a hopeless chain,  
 And yet in secret languish,  
 To feel a fire in every vein,  
 Nor dare disclose my anguish.

Love's veriest wretch, unseen, unknown,  
 I fain my griefs would cover:  
 The bursting sigh, th' unweeting groan,  
 Betray the hapless lover.  
 I know thou doom'st me to despair,  
 Nor wilt, nor canst relieve me;  
 But, oh! Eliza, hear one prayer,  
 For pity's sake forgive me!

The music of thy voice I heard,  
 Nor wist while it enslaved me;  
 I saw thine eyes, yet nothing feared,  
 Till fears no more had saved me.  
 Th' unwary sailor thus aghast,  
 The wheeling torrent viewing,  
 'Mid circling horrors sinks at last  
 In overwhelming ruin.

[It will be observed, that this is a new and improved version of the song sent in April of the preceding year, beginning, *The last Time I came o'er the Moor*. The change most remarkable is the substitution of Eliza for Maria. The alienation of Mrs Riddel, and his resentment against her, must have rendered the latter name no longer tolerable to him. One only can wonder that, with his new and painful associations regarding that lady, he could endure the song itself or propose laying it before the world.]

There is another air, *The Caledonian Hunt's Delight*, to which I wrote a song that you will find in Johnson, *Ye Banks and Braes o' bonnie Doon*; this air, I think, might find a place among your hundred, as Lear says of his knights. Do you know the history of the air? It is curious enough. A good many years ago, Mr James

Miller, writer in your good town, a gentleman whom possibly you know, was in company with our friend Clarke; and talking of Scottish music, Miller expressed an ardent ambition to be able to compose a Scots air. Mr Clarke, partly by way of joke, told him to keep to the black keys of the harpsichord, and preserve some kind of rhythm, and he would infallibly compose a Scots air. Certain it is that, in a few days, Mr Miller produced the rudiments of an air, which Mr Clarke, with some touches and corrections, fashioned into the tune in question.<sup>1</sup> Ritson, you know, has the same story of the black keys; but this account which I have just given you, Mr Clarke informed me of several years ago. Now, to shew you how difficult it is to trace the origin of our airs, I have heard it repeatedly asserted that this was an Irish air; nay, I met with an Irish gentleman, who affirmed he had heard it in Ireland among the old women; while, on the other hand, a lady of fashion, no less than a countess, informed me, that the first person who introduced the air into this country, was a baronet's lady of her acquaintance, who took down the notes from an itinerant piper in the Isle of Man. How difficult, then, to ascertain the truth respecting our poesy and music! I, myself, have lately seen a couple of ballads sung through the streets of Dumfries, with my name at the head of them as the author, though it was the first time I had ever seen them.

I thank you for admitting *Craigieburn Wood*, and I shall take care to furnish you with a new chorus. In fact, the chorus was not my work, but a part of some old verses to the air. If I can catch myself in a more than ordinarily propitious moment, I shall write a new *Craigieburn Wood* altogether. My heart is much in the theme.

I am ashamed, my dear fellow, to make the request—'tis dunning your generosity; but in a moment when I had forgotten whether I was rich or poor, I promised Chloris a copy of your songs. It wrings my honest pride to write you this; but an ungracious request is doubly so by a tedious apology. To make you some amends, as soon as I have extracted the necessary information out of them, I will return you Ritson's volumes.

The lady is not a little proud that she is to make so distinguished a figure in your collection, and I am not a little proud that I have it in my power to please her so much. Lucky it is for your patience that my paper is done, for when I am in a scribbling humour, I know not when to give over.

What Mr Thomson said in answer, shews how little it is possible to tell beforehand how any air is to be taken up by, or to succeed with the public.

<sup>1</sup> Mr Miller served for many years as clerk in the Teind Office, Edinburgh.

MR THOMSON TO BURNS.

15th November 1794.

MY GOOD SIR—Since receiving your last, I have had another interview with Mr Clarke, and a long consultation. He thinks the *Caledonian Hunt* is more bacchanalian than amorous in its nature, and recommends it to you to match the air accordingly. Pray, did it ever occur to you how peculiarly well the Scottish airs are adapted for verses in the form of a dialogue? The first part of the air is generally low, and suited for a man's voice; and the second part, in many instances, cannot be sung, at concert pitch, but by a female voice. A song thus performed makes an agreeable variety, but few of ours are written in this form: I wish you would think of it in some of those that remain. The only one of the kind you have sent me is admirable, and will be a universal favourite.

Your verses for *Rothemurchie* are so sweetly pastoral, and your serenade to *Chloris*, for *Deil tak the Wars*, so passionately tender, that I have sung myself into raptures with them. Your song for *My Lodging is on the cold Ground*, is likewise a diamond of the first-water: I am quite dazzled and delighted by it. Some of your *Chlorises*, I suppose, have flaxen hair, from your partiality for this colour—else we differ about it; for I should scarcely conceive a woman to be a beauty, on reading that she had lint-white locks.

*Farewell, thou Stream that winding flows,* I think excellent, but it is much too serious to come after *Nancy*—at least it would seem an incongruity to provide the same air with merry Scottish and melancholy English verses! The more that the two sets of verses resemble each other in their general character, the better. Those you have manufactured for *Dainty Davie* will answer charmingly. I am happy to find you have begun your anecdotes: I care not how long they be, for it is impossible that anything from your pen can be tedious. Let me beseech you not to use ceremony in telling me when you wish to present any of your friends with the songs: the next carrier will bring you three copies, and you are as welcome to twenty as to a pinch of snuff.

BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

19th November 1794.

You see, my dear sir, what a punctual correspondent I am; though, indeed, you may thank yourself for the *tedium* of my letters, as you have so flattered me on my horsemanship with my favourite hobby, and have praised the grace of his ambling so much, that I am scarcely ever off his back. For instance, this morning, though a keen blowing frost, in my walk before breakfast, I finished my duet, which you were pleased to praise so much. Whether I have uniformly

succeeded, I will not say; but here it is for you, though it is not an hour old.

## PHILLY AND WILLY.

TUNE—*The Sow's Tail.*

HE.

O Philly, happy be that day,  
When roving through the gathered hay,  
My youthfu' heart was stown away,  
And by thy charms, my Philly.

SHE.

O Willy, aye I bless the grove  
Where first I owned my maiden love,  
Whilst thou didst pledge the powers above  
To be my ain dear Willy.

HE.

As songsters of the early year  
Are ilka day mair sweet to hear,  
So ilka day to me mair dear  
And charming is my Philly.

SHE.

As on the brier the budding rose  
Still richer breathes and fairer blows,  
So in my tender bosom grows  
The love I bear my Willy.

HE.

The milder sun and bluer sky,  
That crown my harvest cares wi' joy,  
Were ne'er sae welcome to my eye  
As is a sight o' Philly.

SHE.

The little swallow's wanton wing,  
Though wafting o'er the flowery spring,  
Did ne'er to me sic tidings bring,  
As meeting o' my Willy.

HE.

The bee that through the sunny hour  
Sips nectar in the opening flower,  
Compared wi' my delight is poor,  
Upon the lips o' Philly.

## SHE.

The woodbine in the dewy weet,  
 When evening shades in silence meet,  
 Is nocht sae fragrant or sae sweet  
 As is a kiss o' Willy.

## HE.

Let fortune's wheel at random rin,  
 And fools may tyne, and knaves may win ;  
 My thoughts are a' bound up in ane,  
 And that's my ain dear Philly.

## SHE.

What's a' the joys that gowd can gie ?  
 I care na wealth a single flie ;  
 The lad I love's the lad for me,  
 And that's my ain dear Willy.

Tell me honestly how you like it, and point out whatever you think faulty.

I am much pleased with your idea of singing our songs in alternate stanzas, and regret that you did not hint it to me sooner. In those that remain, I shall have it in my eye. I remember your objections to the name Philly, but it is the common abbreviation of Phillis. Sally, the only other name that suits, has, to my ear, a vulgarity about it, which unfits it for anything except burlesque. The legion of Scottish poetasters of the day, whom your brother-editor, Mr Ritson, ranks with me as my coevals, have always mistaken vulgarity for simplicity; whereas, simplicity is as much *eloignée* from vulgarity on the one hand, as from affected point and puerile conceit on the other.

I agree with you as to the air, *Craigieburn Wood*, that a chorus would in some degree spoil the effect, and shall certainly have none in my projected song to it. It is not, however, a case in point with *Rothemurchie*; there, as in *Roy's Wife of Aldivalloch*, a chorus goes, to my taste, well enough. As to the chorus going first, that is the case with *Roy's Wife*, as well as *Rothemurchie*. In fact, in the first part of both tunes, the rhythm is so peculiar and irregular, and on that irregularity depends so much of their beauty, that we must e'en take them with all their wildness, and humour the verse accordingly. Leaving out the starting-note in both tunes, has, I think, an effect that no regularity could counterbalance the want of.

Try,      { O Roy's wife of Aldivalloch.  
           { O lassie wi' the lint-white locks.  
 and

compare with, { Roy's wife of Aldivalloch.  
           { Lassie wi' the lint-white locks.

Does not the tameness of the prefixed syllable strike you? In the

last case, with the true furor of genius, you strike at once into the wild originality of the air; whereas, in the first insipid method, it is like the grating screw of the pins before the fiddle is brought into tune. This is my taste; if I am wrong, I beg pardon of the cognoscenti.

*The Caledonian Hunt* is so charming, that it would make any subject in a song go down; but pathos is certainly its native tongue. Scottish bacchanalians we certainly want, though the few we have are excellent. For instance, *Todlin Hame* is, for wit and humour, an unparalleled composition; and *Andrew and his cutty Gun* is the work of a master. By the way, are you not quite vexed to think that those men of genius, for such they certainly were, who composed our fine Scottish lyrics, should be unknown? It has given me many a heartache. Apropos to bacchanalian songs in Scottish, I composed one yesterday, for an air I like much—*Lumps o' Pudding*.

CONTENTED WI' LITTLE.

### TUNE—*Lumps o' Pudding.*

Contented wi' little, and cantie wi' mair,  
Whene'er I forgather wi' sorrow and care,  
I gie them a skelp as they're creepin' alang,  
Wi' a cog o' guid swats, and an auld Scottish sang.

I whiles claw the elbow o' troublesome thought;  
But man is a sodger, and life is a faught:  
My mirth and good-humour are coin in my pouch,  
And my freedom's my lairdship nae monarch dare touch.

A towmond o' trouble, should that be my fa',  
A night o' guid-fellowship sowthers it a':  
When at the blithe end of our journey at last,  
Wha the deil ever thinks o' the road he has past? fate

Blind Chance, let her snapper and stoyte on her way ; totter  
Be't to me, be't frae me, e'en let the jade gae :  
Come ease, or come travail ; come pleasure, or pain,  
My warst word is : ' Welcome, and welcome again ! '

If you do not relish this air, I will send it to Johnson.

Since yesterday's penmanship, I have framed a couple of English stanzas, by way of an English song to *Roy's Wife*. You will allow me, that in this instance my English corresponds in sentiment with the Scottish.

## CANST THOU LEAVE ME THUS, MY KATY?

TUNE—*Roy's Wife.*

## CHORUS.

Canst thou leave me thus, my Katy?  
 Canst thou leave me thus, my Katy?  
 Well thou know'st my aching heart,  
 And canst thou leave me thus for pity?

Is this thy plighted, fond regard,  
 Thus cruelly to part, my Katy?  
 Is this thy faithful swain's reward—  
 An aching, broken heart, my Katy?

Farewell! and ne'er such sorrows tear  
 That fickle heart of thine, my Katy!  
 Thou may'st find those will love thee dear—  
 But not a love like mine, my Katy.

Well! I think this, to be done in two or three turns across my room, and with two or three pinches of Irish Blackguard, is not so far amiss. You see I am determined to have my quantum of applause from somebody.

Tell my friend Allan—for I am sure that we only want the trifling circumstance of being known to one another, to be the best friends on earth—that I much suspect he has, in his plates, mistaken the figure of the stock and horn. I have, at last, gotten one, but it is a very rude instrument. It is composed of three parts: the stock, which is the hinder thigh-bone of a sheep, such as you see in a mutton ham; the horn, which is a common Highland cow's horn, cut off at the smaller end, until the aperture be large enough to admit the stock to be pushed up through the horn until it be held by the thicker end of the thigh-bone; and lastly, an oaten-reed, exactly cut and notched like that which you see every shepherd-boy have when the corn-stems are green and full-grown. The reed is not made fast in the bone, but is held by the lips, and plays loose in the smaller end of the stock; while the stock, with the horn hanging on its larger end, is held by the hands in playing. The stock has six or seven ventages on the upper side, and one back-vantage, like the common flute. This of mine was made by a man from the braes of Athole, and is exactly what the shepherds wont to use in that country.

However, either it is not quite properly bored in the holes, or else we have not the art of blowing it rightly; for we can make little of it. If Mr Allan chooses, I will send him a sight of mine, as I look on myself to be a kind of brother-brush with him. ‘Pride in poets is nae sin;’ and I will say it, that I look on Mr Allan and Mr Burns to be the only genuine and real painters of Scottish costume in the world.

This song of *Contented wi' Little, and Cantie wi' Mair*, deserves the reader's special attention, for it was intended by the poet as a *picture of his mind*. So he deliberately tells Mr Thomson in an inedited passage of a letter subsequently written (May 1795). Though comprising the bard's idea of what he was, it may of course have been an imperfect or an exaggerated portraiture, an autobiography not being necessarily the most correct delineation of a life. It will be admitted, however, that it is of some consequence in the biography of Burns, to see what was his own idea of himself, as that idea is itself an important particular of his being and character. He regarded himself, then, as a soldier in the field of life, to whom it was useless, as it is for actual soldiers on duty, to indulge in melancholy complaints. He sometimes could not help yielding a little to dejection; but the merry song and the flowing bowl were a specific to 'cure all again.' A single night of good-fellowship atoned for a twelvemonth of vexation. His liberty and his good-humour were solid possessions, of which he could not be deprived. His compensation for a dreary reach in the path of existence, was that he forgot it when it was passed. In *pococurante* lay his great resource. As to the varying results brought to his door by the tide of chance, he felt much as one who was in some degree his poetical prototype had felt :

‘ Fortune that, with malicious joy,  
Does man, her slave, oppress,  
Proud of her office to destroy,  
Is seldom pleased to bless :  
Still various and inconstant still,  
But with an inclination to be ill,  
Promotes, degrades, delights in strife,  
And makes a lottery of life.  
I can enjoy her when she's kind,  
But when she dances in the wind,  
And shakes her wings, and will not stay,  
I puff the prostitute away.  
The little or the much she gave is quietly resigned :  
Content with poverty, my soul I arm ;  
And virtue, though in rags, will keep me warm.’<sup>1</sup>

Such was Burns in his own idea—not his cool daylight idea, as he would have spoken of himself to a commissioner of excise, or a patronising member of parliament; but his *poetical* idea—that which he would have avowed in those candle-light scenes in the Globe Tavern, which were to him a rough portion of the poetry of existence. And it really *is* Burns in one of his aspects, though only one.

<sup>1</sup> *Horace*, translated by Dryden.

The other song, *Canst thou leave me thus, my Katy?* which he produced in two or three turns through his little room, under favour of two or three pinches of Irish Blackguard, is a poetical expression of the more gentle feeling he was now beginning to entertain towards Mrs Riddel. Burns could not write verses on any woman without imaging her as a mistress, past, present, or potential. He, accordingly, treats the breach of friendship which had occurred between him and the fair hostess of Woodley Park as a falling away on her part from constancy in the tender passion. This may be felt as a curious whim as between two persons in their respective domestic circumstances, not to speak of that disparity of social rank which it is so difficult wholly to overcome, even in favour of the most divinely inspired genius. But it is at least pleasing, as the manifestation of an improvement of temper on Burns's part. It appears, moreover, that he sent the song to Mrs Riddel, as a sort of olive branch, and that she did not receive it in an unkindly spirit, though probably without forgetting that the bard had wounded her delicacy. She answered the song in the same strain, and sent her own piece to Burns, for it was found by Currie amongst his papers after his death. Currie remarks only the odd circumstance, that she, an Englishwoman, answered in Scotch, a song written in English by a Scotchman. We may, at this distance from the events, remark the more important particular of the lady's readiness to take up Burns in the poetical relation in which he had depicted himself, and to meet him, after their sad winter of discontent, in a spring of fresh-blown kindness.

## STAY, MY WILLIE, YET BELIEVE ME.

Stay, my Willie—yet believe me;  
 Stay, my Willie—yet believe me;  
 For, ah! thou know'st na' every pang  
 Wad wring my bosom shouldst thou leave me.

Tell me that thou yet art true,  
 And a' my wrongs shall be forgiven;  
 And when this heart proves fause to thee,  
 Yon sun shall cease its course in heaven.

But to think I was betrayed,  
 That falsehood e'er our loves should sunder!  
 To take the flow'ret to my breast,  
 And find the guilefu' serpent under.

Could I hope thou'dst ne'er deeeeive,  
 Celestial pleasures, might I choose 'em,  
 I'd slight, nor seek in other spheres  
 That heaven I'd find within thy bosom.

Stay, my Willie—yet believe me;  
 Stay, my Willie—yet believe me;  
 For, ah! thou know'st na' every pang  
 Wad wring my bosom shouldst thou leave me.

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## MR THOMSON TO BURNS.

28th November 1794.

I ACKNOWLEDGE, my dear sir, you are not only the most punctual, but the most delectable correspondent I ever met with. To attempt flattering you never entered into my head; the truth is, I look back with surprise at my impudence, in so frequently nibbling at lines and couplets of your incomparable lyrics, for which, perhaps, if you had served me right, you would have sent me to the devil. On the contrary, however, you have all along condescended to invite my criticism with so much courtesy, that it ceases to be wonderful if I have sometimes given myself the airs of a reviewer. Your last budget demands unqualified praise: all the songs are charming, but the duet is a *chef-d'œuvre*. *Lumps o' Pudding* shall certainly make one of my family dishes; you have cooked it so capitally, that it will please all palates. Do give us a few more of this cast when you find yourself in good spirits; these convivial songs are more wanted than those of the amorous kind, of which we have great choice. Besides, one does not often meet with a singer capable of giving the proper effect to the latter, while the former are easily sung, and acceptable to everybody. I participate in your regret, that the authors of some of our best songs are unknown; it is provoking to every admirer of genius.

I mean to have a picture painted from your beautiful ballad, *The Soldier's Return*, to be engraved for one of my frontispieces. The most interesting point of time appears to me, when she first recognises her ain dear Willie: 'She gazed, she reddened like a rose.' The three lines immediately following are no doubt more impressive on the reader's feelings; but were the painter to fix on these, then you'll observe the animation and anxiety of her countenance is gone, and he could only represent her fainting in the soldier's arms. But I submit the matter to you, and beg your opinion.

Allan desires me to thank you for your accurate description of the stock and horn, and for the very gratifying compliment you pay him, in considering him worthy of standing in a niche by the side of Burns in the Scottish Pantheon. He has seen the rude instrument you describe, so does not want you to send it; but wishes to know whether you believe it to have ever been generally used as a musical pipe by the Scottish shepherds, and when, and in what part of the country chiefly. I doubt much if it was capable of anything but routing and roaring. A friend of mine says he remembers to have heard one in his younger days, made of wood instead of your bone, and that the sound was abominable.

Do not, I beseech you, return any books.

Mr Cromeck states that, 'in a conversation with his friend Mr Perry—the proprietor of the *Morning Chronicle*—Mr Miller [of Dalswinton, younger] represented to that gentleman the insufficiency of Burns's salary to answer the imperious demands of a numerous family. In their sympathy for his misfortunes, and in their regret that his talents were nearly lost to the world of letters, these gentlemen agreed on the plan of settling him in London. To accomplish this most desirable object, Mr Perry very spiritedly made the poet a handsome offer of an annual stipend for the exercise of his talents in his newspaper. Burns's reasons for refusing this offer are stated in the present letter.'

TO PETER MILLER, JUN., ESQ.

DUMFRIES, Nov. 1794.

DEAR SIR—Your offer is indeed truly generous, and most sincerely do I thank you for it; but in my present situation, I find that I dare not accept it. You well know my political sentiments; and were I an insular individual, unconnected with a wife and a family of children, with the most fervid enthusiasm I would have volunteered my services: I then could and would have despised all consequences that might have ensued.

My prospect in the Excise is something; at least, it is, encumbered as I am with the welfare, the very existence, of near half-a-score of helpless individuals, what I dare not sport with.

In the meantime, they are most welcome to my Ode; only, let them insert it as a thing they have met with by accident, and unknown to me. Nay, if Mr Perry, whose honour, after your character of him, I cannot doubt, if he will give me an address and channel by which anything will come safe from those spies with which he may be certain that his correspondence is beset, I will now and then send him any bagatelle that I may write. In the present hurry of Europe, nothing but news and politics will be regarded; but against the days of peace, which Heaven send soon, my little assistance may perhaps fill up an idle column of a newspaper. I have long had it in my head to try my hand in the way of little prose essays, which I propose sending into the world through the medium of some newspaper; and should these be worth his while, to these Mr Perry shall be welcome: and all my reward shall be—his treating me with his paper, which, by the by, to anybody who has the least relish for wit, is a high treat indeed. With the most grateful esteem, I am ever, dear sir,

R. B.

Burns's conduct on this occasion has given rise to much comment. That he should have declined so important an addition to his income—for it seems to be understood that this was meant—has caused as much surprise as his refusal of remuneration for

his songs. Yet there is no mistaking his reasons: he dreaded, by accepting this literary income, to risk his prospects in the Excise—for he must have had good grounds for believing that the government would not long retain in its service a regular contributor to the *Morning Chronicle*. What would weigh the more with him, his prospects in the Excise were at this time brightening; his hopes of a speedy appointment to a supervisorship were strong. Again, it must be pressed on the reader's attention, that Burns, though certainly not a rich man, and though he had some little debts hanging over his head, was not quite so sunk in poverty as to have made the refusal of Mr Perry's offer the last degree of hardship. The whole popular idea entertained of the pecuniary circumstances of Burns, and consequently of the manner in which he and his family subsisted in the latter part of his life, requires correction.

The stated official income of Burns was L.50 a year, which usually became L.70, in consequence of extra allowances for certain departments of business. It has been surmised that he had to keep a horse out of this little income; but in reality, when a horse was required during the Dumfries period of his life, he was accustomed to hire one from an inn, and its expense was charged to the service. There seem to have been other sources of official income, of a more precarious nature: on the back of a song in his handwriting, he has noted what follows: 'I owe Mr Findlater L.6, 8s. 5½d. My share of last year's fine is L.12, 2s. 1d. W. M., L.14, 3s. 6d.' If this was anything like the average of some other perquisite, it would make up Burns's official revenues to something above L.80 a year. It may also be remarked, that his son, Mr Robert Burns, believes that the poet occasionally derived a little income from land-surveying—a business for which his Kirkoswald education had laid the foundation of his qualifications. Add to all this the solid perquisites which he derived from seizures of contraband spirits, tea, and other articles, which it was then the custom to divide among the officers, and we shall see that Burns could scarcely be considered as enjoying less than L.90 a year. This, indeed, is but a humble income in comparison with the deserts of the bard; yet it is equally certain, that many worthy families in the middle ranks of life in Scottish country towns were then supported in a decent manner upon no larger means; and very few men of the poet's original profession, out of East Lothian and Berwickshire, drew larger incomes from their farms. It is therefore not surprising to learn that Burns, though now and then forced to be beholden to a friend for a small temporary loan—we have seen an example of this when a failure of importation closed one of his sources of extraordinary income—did, nevertheless, in general maintain his household in

some reasonable degree of comfort. I have consulted the eldest son of the bard on this subject, and find his views of the paternal *ménage* at Dumfries very much the same as those with which many little circumstances have impressed myself. Mr R. B. speaks of the house in the Mill Vennel as being one of a good order, such as were used in those days by the better class of citizens, and the life of his father and mother as being comparatively genteel life. They always had a maid-servant, and sat in their parlour. That room, and the two principal bedrooms, were carpeted, and otherwise well furnished. The poet possessed a mahogany dining-table, where he often had good company assembled. In the same room stood his folding-down desk, at which he had to do a considerable amount of business in the granting of licences, permits, &c. and where the son remembers seeing him writing his letters to Mr Thomson, always a business requiring a good deal of care. There was much rough comfort in the house not to have been found in those of ordinary citizens; for, besides the spoils of smugglers, as above mentioned, the poet received many presents of game and country produce from the rural gentlefolk, besides occasional barrels of oysters from Hill, Cunningham, and other friends in town, so that he possibly was as much envied by some of his neighbours as he has since been pitied by the general body of his countrymen.

An intimate friend of Mrs Burns during the life of the poet—the *Jessy* of his songs, now Mrs James Thomson—has similar recollections of the household in the Mill Vennel. She speaks of the large seizures of rum, and the frequent presents, as only leading to a degree of hospitality somewhat excessive. At the same time, as far as circumstances left Burns to his own inclinations, his personal domestic habits were generally simple and temperate. As he was often detained by company from the dinner provided for him by his wife, she sometimes, on a conjecture of his probable absence, would not prepare that meal for him. When he chanced to come home, and find no dinner ready, he was never in the least troubled or irritated, but would address himself with the greatest cheerfulness to any succedaneum that could be readily set before him. They generally had abundance of good Dunlop cheese, sent to them by their Ayrshire friends. The poet would sit down to that wholesome fare, with bread and butter, and his book by his side, and seem to any casual visitor as happy as a courtier at the feasts of kings.

He was always anxious that his wife should have a neat and genteel appearance. In consequence, as she alleged, of the duties of nursing, and attending to her infants, she could not help being sometimes a little out of order. Burns disliked this, and not only remonstrated against it in a gentle way, but did the utmost that in him lay to counteract it, by buying for her the best clothes he could

afford. Any little novelty in female dress was almost sure to meet with patronage from Burns—all with the aim of keeping up a spirit for neat dressing in his wife. She was, for instance, one of the first persons in Dumfries who appeared in a dress of gingham—a stuff now common, but, at its first introduction, rather costly, and almost exclusively used by persons of superior condition.

On the whole, it must be admitted that Burns's poverty at this, and perhaps at several other periods of his life, has been overstated. After settling in Dumfries, he certainly was without spare funds, or anything that could be considered as a provision for his family. But of the necessities of life he never was in any want, nor, down to the few last months, were even the comforts deficient.

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BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

[*Post-mark, Dec. 9], 1794.*

IT IS, I assure you, the pride of my heart to do anything to forward or add to the value of your book; and as I agree with you, that the Jacobite song in the *Museum* to *There'll never be Peace till Jamie comes Hame*, would not so well consort with Peter Pindar's excellent love-song to that air, I have just framed for you the following:—

[The song here transcribed was one entitled *My Nannie's awa*, referring to Mrs M'Lehose's absence in the West Indies. Though perhaps not completed till now, it has been printed in the third volume of the present edition, p. 217.]

How does this please you? As to the point of time for the expression, in your proposed print from my *Sodger's Return*, it must certainly be at—"She gazed." The interesting dubiety and suspense taking possession of her countenance, and the gushing fondness, with a mixture of roguish playfulness in his, strike me as things of which a master will make a great deal. In great haste, but in great truth, yours.

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TO MRS DUNLOP,  
IN LONDON.

DUMFRIES, 20th December 1794.<sup>1</sup>

I HAVE been prodigiously disappointed in this London journey of yours. In the first place, when your last to me reached Dumfries, I was in the country, and did not return until too late to answer your letter; in the next place, I thought you would certainly take this route; and now I know not what has become of you, or whether this may reach you at all. God grant that it may find you and yours in prospering health and good spirits! Do let me hear from you the soonest possible.

<sup>1</sup> Misplaced by Dr Currie under December 1795.

As I hope to get a frank from my friend Captain Miller, I shall, every leisure hour, take up the pen, and gossip away whatever comes first—prose or poetry, sermon or song. In this last article I have abounded of late. I have often mentioned to you a superb publication of Scottish songs, which is making its appearance in your great metropolis, and where I have the honour to preside over the Scottish verse, as no less a personage than Peter Pindar does over the English.

*December 29th.*

Since I began this letter, I have been appointed to act in the capacity of supervisor here; and I assure you, what with the load of business, and what with that business being new to me, I could scarcely have commanded ten minutes to have spoken to you, had you been in town, much less to have written you an epistle. This appointment is only temporary, and during the illness of the present incumbent; but I look forward to an early period when I shall be appointed in full form—a consummation devoutly to be wished! My political sins seem to be forgiven me.

This is the season (New-Year's Day is now my date) of wishing; and mine are most fervently offered up for you! May life to you be a positive blessing while it lasts, for your own sake; and that it may yet be greatly prolonged, is my wish for my own sake, and for the sake of the rest of your friends! What a transient business is life! Very lately, I was a boy; but t'other day, I was a young man; and I already begin to feel the rigid fibre and stiffening joints of old age coming fast o'er my frame. With all my follies of youth, and, I fear, a few vices of manhood, still I congratulate myself on having had, in early days, religion strongly impressed on my mind. I have nothing to say to any one as to which sect he belongs to or what creed he believes; but I look on the man who is firmly persuaded of infinite wisdom and goodness superintending and directing every circumstance that can happen in his lot—I felicitate such a man as having a solid foundation for his mental enjoyment—a firm prop and sure stay in the hour of difficulty, trouble, and distress—and a never-failing anchor of hope when he looks beyond the grave.

*12th January [1795.]*

You will have seen our worthy and ingenious friend, the doctor [Dr Moore], long ere this. I hope he is well, and beg to be remembered to him. I have just been reading over again, I daresay for the hundred-and-fiftieth time, his *View of Society and Manners*; and still I read it with delight. His humour is perfectly original—it is neither the humour of Addison, nor Swift, nor Sterne, nor of anybody but Dr Moore. By the by, you have deprived me of *Zeluco*; remember that, when you are disposed to rake up the sins of my neglect from among the ashes of my laziness.

He has paid me a pretty compliment, by quoting me in his last publication.

R. B.

Burns had learned to conduct vicarious courtships in his early days, and had not yet lost the art. According to a recital by one who has given much attention to our subject:<sup>1</sup> ‘In the neighbourhood of Dumfries, on the estate of Rockhall, some fifty years since, lived a worthy farmer, whom Burns was in the habit of occasionally visiting. They had spent many a merry evening together, enriched with those sallies of wit and humour which stamped the poet’s conversation with even more attraction and fascination than all the marvels of his poetry. The progress of their intercourse was varied by an event which must have afforded Burns no little amusement—the farmer fell in love. The lady was of respectable connexions; and the farmer, though excellent at a song or anecdote, was unable for the task of writing a proper declaration of his passion. In this extremity, he called in the assistance of the poet. Burns furnished him with two draughts of a love-letter, and the draughts are certainly curiosities in their way. They are not quite so formal and grandiloquent in tone as the famous epistle which Tom Pipes in *Peregrine Pickle* procured from the village schoolmaster, which commenced, “Divine empress of my soul,” and implored the favourite fair one to “let the genial rays of her benevolence melt the icy emanations of disdain.” Burns’s letters, however, are of the same character. His prose style was always stiff and unnatural, being in this respect the antipodes of his verse, which flowed with such imitable grace and simplicity. On the present occasion, too, he was writing in a feigned character, without the prompting of those genial impulses which made him so thriving a wooer himself. We believe the farmer was successful in his suit. Miss G—— listened to the passion so ardently proclaimed by proxy, and lived to be the happy wife of the farmer. We have no doubt that the worthy pair and the poet often laughed over this adventure, during the few remaining years and evil days which darkened the close of the poet’s life.’

MADAM—What excuse to make for the liberty I am going to assume in this letter, I am utterly at a loss. If the most unfeigned respect for your accomplished worth—if the most ardent attachment—if sincerity and truth—if these, on my part, will in any degree weigh with you, my apology is these, and these alone. Little as I have had the pleasure of your acquaintance, it has been enough to convince me what enviable happiness must be his whom you shall honour with your particular regard, and more than enough to convince me how unworthy I am to offer myself a candidate for that partiality. In this kind of trembling hope, madam, I intend

<sup>1</sup> Mr Robert Carruthers—*Inverness Courier*, September 1840.

very soon doing myself the honour of waiting on you, persuaded that, however little Miss G—— may be disposed to attend to the suit of a lover as unworthy of her as I am, she is still too good to despise an honest man, whose only fault is loving her too much for his own peace. I have the honour to be, madam, your most devoted humble servant.

DEAR MADAM—The passion of love had need to be productive of much delight; as where it takes thorough possession of the man, it almost unfits him for anything else. The lover who is certain of an equal return of affection, is surely the happiest of men; but he who is a prey to the horrors of anxiety and dreaded disappointment, is a being whose situation is by no means enviable. Of this, my present experience gives me sufficient proof. To me, amusement seems impertinent, and business intrusion, while you alone engross every faculty of my mind. May I request you to drop me a line, to inform me when I may wait on you? For pity's sake, do; and let me have it soon. In the meantime, allow me, in all the artless sincerity of truth, to assure you, that I truly am, my dearest madam, your ardent lover, and devoted humble servant.<sup>1</sup>

On an occasion of a totally different kind, Burns held the pen for one who could not do it well for himself. According to Mr Cromek: ‘A neighbour of the poet’s at Dumfries called on him, and complained that he had been greatly disappointed in the irregular delivery of the paper of the *Morning Chronicle*. Burns asked: “Why do not you write to the editors of the paper?” “Good God! sir, can *I* presume to write to the learned editors of a newspaper?” “Well, if *you* are afraid of writing to the editors of a newspaper, *I* am not; and, if you think proper, *I’ll* draw up a sketch of a letter, which you may copy.”

‘Burns tore a leaf from his excise-book, and instantly produced the sketch which I have transcribed, and which is here printed. The poor man thanked him, and took the letter home. However, that caution which the watchfulness of his enemies had taught him to exercise, prompted him to the prudence of begging a friend to wait on the person for whom it was written, and request the favour to have it returned. This request was complied with, and the paper never appeared in print.’

#### TO THE EDITOR OF THE MORNING CHRONICLE.

SIR—You will see, by your subscribers’ list, that I have been about nine months of that number.

I am sorry to inform you, that in that time seven or eight of your

<sup>1</sup> ‘The originals of these curious letters are in the possession of a very successful collector of curiosities—the warm-hearted and entertaining Mr William Smith, perfumer, Dumfries.’

papers either have never been sent me, or else have never reached me. To be deprived of any one number of the first newspaper in Great Britain for information, ability, and independence, is what I can ill brook and bear; but to be deprived of that most admirable oration of the Marquis of Lansdowne, when he made the great, though ineffectual attempt (in the language of the poet, I fear too true) ‘to save a SINKING STATE’—this was a loss that I neither can nor will forgive you. That paper, sir, never reached me; but I demand it of you. I am a BRITON, and must be interested in the cause of LIBERTY; I am a MAN, and the RIGHTS OF HUMAN NATURE cannot be indifferent to me. However, do not let me mislead you—I am not a man in that situation of life which, as your subscriber, can be of any consequence to you, in the eyes of those to whom SITUATION OF LIFE ALONE is the criterion of MAN. I am but a plain tradesman, in this distant, obscure country-town; but that humble domicile in which I shelter my wife and children, is the CASTELLUM of a BRITON; and that scanty, hard-earned income which supports them, is as truly my property, as the most magnificent fortune of the most PUSSANT MEMBER of your HOUSE OF NOBLES.

These, sir, are my sentiments, and to them I subscribe my name; and were I a man of ability and consequence enough to address the PUBLIC, with that name should they appear. I am, &c.

The date of this letter may be referred with tolerable confidence to the commencement of 1795, as the specimen of parliamentary eloquence to which it alludes was probably a remarkable oration against the continuance of the war, which the Marquis of Lansdowne delivered in the debate on the Address, 30th December 1794.

So existence flows on with Burns in this pleasant southern town. He has daily duties in stamping leather, gauging malt-vats, noting the manufacture of candles, and granting licences for the transport of spirits. These duties he performs with fidelity to the king and not too much rigour to the subject. As he goes about them in the forenoon, in his respectable suit of dark clothes, and with his little boy Robert perhaps holding by his hand and conversing with him on his school-exercises, he is beheld by the general public with respect, as a person in some authority, the head of a family, and also as a man of literary note; and people are heard addressing him deferentially as *Mr* Burns—a form of his name which is still prevalent in Dumfries. At a leisure hour before dinner, he will call at some house where there is a piano—such as Mr Newall, the writer’s—and there have some young miss to touch over for him one or two of his favourite Scotch airs, such as the *Sutor’s Daughter*, in order that he may accommodate to it some stanzas that have been humming through

his brain for the last few days. For another half hour, he will be seen standing at the head of some cross street with two or three young fellows, bankers' clerks, or 'writer-chiels' commencing business, whom he is regaling with sallies of his bright but not always innocent wit—indulging there, indeed, in a strain of conversation so different from what had passed in the respectable elderly writer's mansion, that, though he were not the same man, it could not have been more different. Later in the day, he takes a solitary walk along the Dock Green by the river-side, or to Lincluden, and composes the most part of a new song; or he spends a couple of hours at his folding-down desk, between the fire and window in his parlour, transcribing in his bold round hand the remarks which occur to him on Mr Thomson's last letter, together with some of his own recently composed songs. As a possible variation upon this routine, he has been seen passing along the old bridge of Devorgilla Balliol, about three o'clock, with his sword-cane in his hand, and his black beard unusually well shaven, being on his way to dine with John Syme at Ryedale, where young Mr Oswald of Auchincruive is to be of the party—or maybe in the opposite direction, to partake of the luxuries of John Bushby, at Tinwald Downs. But we presume a day when no such attraction invades. The evening is passing quietly at home, and pleasant-natured Jean has made herself neat, and come in at six o'clock to give him his tea—a meal he always takes. At this period, however, there is something remarkably exciting in the proceedings of the French army under Pichegru; or Fox, Adam, or Sheridan, is expected to make an onslaught upon the ministry in the House of Commons. The post comes into Dumfries at eight o'clock at night. There is always a group of gentlemen on the street, eager to hear the news. Burns saunters out to the High Street, and waits amongst the rest. The intelligence of the evening is very interesting. The Convention has decreed the annexation of the Netherlands—or the new treason-bill has passed the House of Lords, with only the feeble protest of Bedford, Derby, and Lauderdale. These things merit some discussion. The trades-lads go off to strong ale in the closes; the gentlemen slide in little groups into the King's Arms Hotel or the George. As for Burns, he will just have a single glass and a half-hour's chat beside John Hyslop's fire, and then go quietly home. So he is quickly absorbed in the little narrow close where that vintner maintains his state. There, however, one or two friends have already established themselves, all with precisely the same virtuous intent. They heartily greet the bard. Meg or John bustles about to give him his accustomed place, which no one ever disputes. And, somehow, the debate on the news of the evening

leads on to other chat of an interesting kind. Then Burns becomes brilliant, and his friends give him the applause of their laughter. One jug succeeds another—mirth abounds—and it is not till Mrs Hyslop has declared that they are going beyond all bounds, and she positively will not give them another drop of hot water, that our bard at length bethinks him of returning home, where Bonnie Jean has been lost in peaceful slumber for three hours, after vainly wondering ‘what can be keeping Robert out so late the nicht.’ Burns gets to bed a little excited and worn out, but not in a state to provoke much remark from his amiable partner, in whom nothing can abate the veneration with which she has all along regarded him. And though he beds at a latish hour, most likely he is up next morning between seven and eight, to hear little Robert his day’s lesson in *Cæsar*, or, if the season invites, to take a half-hour’s stroll before breakfast along the favourite Dock Green.

Thus existence moves on, not unenjoyed, and not without its labours both for the present and future; and yet it is an unsatisfactory life, as compared with what might have been expected by those who saw Burns in his first flush of fame at Monboddo’s suppers or the reunions of Dr Ferguson. He has had his aspirations after better things. In 1788, he thought of a poetical autobiography, the *Poet’s Progress*, and wrote two little bits for it, sketches of Creech and Smellie. At the end of ’89, stimulated by reading English plays and visiting the Dumfries theatre, he had bethought him of a Scottish comic drama of modern manners, but, so far as we know, never wrote a line of it. The idea still kept possession of his head; but in autumn ’90, when Mr Ramsay of Ochtertyre visited him, he had shifted the proposed period, and thought of dramatising a droll legend regarding Robert Bruce. What even so lively a wit could have made of such an incident as *Rob Macquechan’s elshen*, which ran nine inches up into the fugitive king’s heel, we cannot tell. It does not seem to have ever gone beyond an intention. It is supposed, but on no clear evidence known to us, that the poet composed *Bruce’s Address* as a portion of a more serious drama on the liberator of Scotland, which he then contemplated. We see now that he cast about for the subject of a Scottish opera like the *Duenna*, and it is not unlikely that, in the *Lover’s Morning Address to his Mistress*, he either composed a portion of such a work, or was trying his hand in such a kind of composition. This, too, the last of his schemes for an extended effort in literature, died in the conception. Occasional songs, or other short pieces, were alone compatible with his present duties and inclinations; and we may be thankful that, in such circumstances, he exerted himself even in that limited manner.

BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

January 1795.

I FEAR for my songs; however, a few may please, yet originality is a coy feature in composition, and in a multiplicity of efforts in the same style, disappears altogether. For these three thousand years, we poetic folks have been describing the spring, for instance; and as the spring continues the same, there must soon be a sameness in the imagery, &c. of these said rhyming folks. . . .

A great critic (Aikin) on songs says, that love and wine are the exclusive themes for song-writing. The following is on neither subject, and consequently is no song, but will be allowed, I think, to be two or three pretty good prose thoughts inverted into rhyme:—

## FOR A’ THAT AND A’ THAT.

Is there, for honest poverty,  
 That hangs his head, and a’ that!  
 The coward slave we pass him by,  
 We dare be poor for a’ that!  
 For a’ that, and a’ that,  
 Our toils obscure, and a’ that;  
 The rank is but the guinea’s stamp,<sup>1</sup>  
 The man’s the gowd for a’ that!

What though on hamely fare we dine,  
 Wear hoddin gray, and a’ that;  
 Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,  
 A man’s a man for a’ that!  
 For a’ that, and a’ that,  
 Their tinsel show, and a’ that;  
 The honest man, though e'er sae poor,  
 Is king o’ men for a’ that!

Ye see yon birkie, ca’d a lord,  
 Wha struts, and stares, and a’ that;  
 Though hundreds worship at his word,  
 He’s but a coof for a’ that:  
 For a’ that, and a’ that,  
 His ribbon, star, and a’ that;  
 The man of independent mind,  
 He looks and laughs at a’ that.

<sup>1</sup> A similar thought occurs in Wycherly’s *Plain-Dealer*, which Burns probably never saw: ‘I weigh the man, not his title; ’tis not the king’s stamp can make the metal better or heavier. Your lord is a leaden shilling, which you bend every way, and debases the stamp he bears.’

A prince can mak a belted knight,  
A marquis, duke, and a' that;  
But an honest man's aboon his might,  
    Guid faith, he maunna fa'<sup>1</sup> that!  
For a' that, and a' that,  
    Their dignities, and a' that;  
The pith o' sense, and pride o' worth,  
    Are higher rank<sup>2</sup> than a' that.

Then let us pray that come it may—  
As come it will for a' that—  
That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,  
May bear the gree, and a' that.  
For a' that, and a' that,  
It's coming yet, for a' that,  
That man to man, the warld o'er,  
Shall brothers be for a' that!

supremacy

*Jan. 15th.*—The foregoing has lain by me this fortnight, for want of a spare moment. The supervisor of excise here being ill, I have been acting for him, and I assure you I have hardly five minutes to myself to thank you for your elegant present of Pindar. The typography is admirable, and worthy of the truly original bard.

I do not give you the foregoing song for your book, but merely by way of *vive la bagatelle*; for the piece is not really poetry. How will the following do for *Craigieburn Wood*?

[For the new version of *Craigieburn Wood*, here transcribed by the bard, see Vol. iii. p. 235.]

Farewell! God bless you!

By this time the paroxysm of alarm which commenced in 1792, and under which every man who did not see perfection in the British constitution had been treated as something little better than a mad dog, was in a great measure past. The reaction of the French against Barrère and other heroes of the Committee of Safety, was in full flow, and Britain felt that she had nothing to dread from the analogous class of her own citizens. The unfortunate reformers of '92 and '93 began, accordingly, to get up their heads again, not as reformers—for all idea of change for years to come was at an end—but as well-meaning members of society. Conservatism felt that it could afford to be compassionate and forgiving; and many of its special votaries were perhaps conscious in their secret thoughts, that certain of their

<sup>1</sup> Fa', as a noun, means lot or share; as a verb, to get or obtain. Burns here uses the word in a violent sense, *q. d.* 'He must not attempt to have that as a thing in his power.'

<sup>2</sup> Usually printed 'ranks,' but so in manuscript.

opponents had been grievously misjudged and wronged. Burns, amongst others, appears to have experienced the benefit of this relenting mood.

Both the house which he had occupied in the Wee Vennel, and that now tenanted by him, belonged to Captain John Hamilton of Allershaw; a gentleman of the highest respectability and most amiable character, who had treated him from the first with great kindness. For a twelvemonth past, there had been no intercourse between the landlord and his distinguished tenant; but now, on Burns sending a small sum of money towards the liquidation of arrears of rent, Hamilton sent him a friendly note:—

TO MR BURNS.

DUMFRIES, 30th Jan. 1795.

DEAR SIR—At same time that I acknowledge the receipt of three guineas to account of house-rent, will you permit me to enter a complaint of a different nature? When you first came here, I courted your acquaintance; I wished to see you; I asked you to call in, and take a family dinner now and then, when it suited your convenience.

For more than twelve months, you have never entered my door, but seemed rather shy when we met. This kept me from sending any further particular invitation.

If I have in any shape offended, or from inadvertency hurt the delicacy of your feelings, tell me so, and I will endeavour to set it to rights.

If you are disposed to renew our acquaintance, [I] will be glad to see you to a family dinner at 3 o'clock on Sunday, and, at anyrate, hope you will believe me, dear sir, your sincere friend,

JOHN HAMILTON.

Burns's answer came next morning:—

TO CAPTAIN HAMILTON.

Saturday Morning, [January 31.]

SIR—I was from home, and had not the opportunity of seeing your more than polite, your most friendly card. It is not possible, most worthy sir, that you could do anything to offend anybody. My backwardness proceeds alone from the abashing consciousness of my obscure station in the ranks of life. Many an evening have I sighed to call in and spend it at your social fireside; but a shyness of appearing obtrusive amid the fashionable visitants occasionally there, kept me at a distance. It shall do so no more. On Monday, I must be in the country, and most part of the week; but the first leisure evening I shall avail myself of your hospitable goodness. With the most ardent sentiments of gratitude and respect, I have the honour to be, sir, your highly-obliged humble servant, ROBT. BURNS.

It is tolerably clear, that the reason which Burns here assigns for his conduct could not be the sole one. So modest a sense of his position in life was not characteristic of the bard who had just sung, *A Man's a Man for a' that*. And it might have been asked, how he had come to act on this feeling for the last twelvemonth, when no such sentiment had withheld his visits to Hamilton's mansion before. One can scarcely doubt, that there were other considerations pressing upon him—the unpleasant sense of debt towards his landlord, and the consciousness that he was under the ban of a large part of respectable society on account of politics, the Riddel quarrel, and his own many imprudences. He had clearly set forward as the sole and all-sufficient reason one comparatively weak, but that which could alone be gracefully acknowledged. On the other hand, the warmth of Hamilton's letter, so unlike the spirit of the M'Culloch anecdote of June '94, shews tolerably well how Burns was beginning to recover in the good graces of the respectables.

The movement towards a reconciliation with Maria Riddel, which commenced in November, had not been allowed to stop short. About this time, the lady had sent Burns a book which she probably supposed him likely to enjoy in the perusal. She had also communicated a new poetical expression of her feelings on their late estrangement, in the form of a song, which she desired the poet to correct or criticise, for in this strange confusion of love and literature, it seems to have been thought not unfitting that Burns should, in the way of his art, help to polish the shaft of tender reproach aimed at his own bosom.

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#### TO MRS RIDDEL.

MR BURNS's compliments to Mrs Riddel—is much obliged to her for her polite attention in sending him the book. Owing to Mr B. at present acting as supervisor of Excise, a department that occupies his every hour of the day, he has not that time to spare which is necessary for any belles-lettres pursuit; but as he will in a week or two again return to his wonted leisure, he will then pay that attention to Mrs R.'s beautiful song, *To thee, loved Nith*, which it so well deserves. When *Anacharsis's Travels* come to hand, which Mrs Riddel mentioned as her gift to the public library, Mr B. will feel honoured by the indulgence of a perusal of them before presentation: it is a book he has never yet seen, and the regulations of the library allow too little leisure for deliberate reading.

*Friday evening.*

P. S.—Mr Burns will be much obliged to Mrs Riddel, if she will favour him with a perusal of any of her poetical pieces which he may not have seen.

The song has fortunately been preserved.

TO THEE, LOVED NITH.

To thee, loved Nith, thy gladsome plains,  
Where late with careless thought I ranged,  
Though prest with care, and sunk in wo,  
To thee I bring a heart unchanged.  
I love thee, Nith, thy banks and braes,  
Though Memory there my bosom tear,  
For there he roved, that broke my heart,  
Yet to that heart, ah, still how dear!

And now your banks and bonnie braes  
But waken sad remembrance' smart;  
The very shades I held most dear,  
Now strike fresh anguish to my heart:  
Deserted bower! where are they now—  
Ah! where the garlands that I wove  
With faithful care, each morn to deck  
The altars of ungrateful love?

The flowers of spring, how gay they bloomed,  
When last with him I wandered here!  
The flowers of spring are passed away  
For wintry horrors dark and drear.  
Yon osiered stream, by whose lone banks  
My songs have lulled him oft to rest,  
Is now in icy fetters locked—  
Cold as my false love's frozen breast.

MR THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 30th January 1795.

MY DEAR SIR—I thank you heartily for *Nannie's Awa*, as well as for *Craigieburn*, which I think a very comely pair. Your observation on the difficulty of original writing in a number of efforts, in the same style, strikes me very forcibly; and it has, again and again, excited my wonder to find you continually surmounting this difficulty, in the many delightful songs you have sent me. Your *vive la bagatelle* song, *For a' that*, shall undoubtedly be included in my list.

The supervising duties which Burns had taken up, brought him early in February to the village of Ecclefechan, in Annandale—a

place which will continue to be memorable in Scottish biography, as the birthplace of several remarkable men, all of them connected with the history of our bard. The first was the schooltyrant Nicol, of whom we have not heard for some time. The second was Dr Currie of Liverpool, the amiable editor of Burns, and most effective friend of his family. A third, who would be first seeing the light just about this time, was Thomas Carlyle, than whom no man has written about Burns with a fairer apprehension of his merits, or a truer expression of sympathy for his misfortunes. Burns, little thinking of the destinies of Ecclefechan infants, had come there in the midst of an extraordinary fall of snow, which threatened to keep him a prisoner to his inn for many days. It was such a snow-fall as no living man remembered. Most people throughout Scotland, on wakening in the morning, found their houses absorbed in it up to the second tier of windows; and in some hollows of the Campsie Fells, near Glasgow, it was drifted to the depth of from eighty to a hundred feet. Some roads were impassable for weeks, and even in the streets of Edinburgh, it had not entirely disappeared on the king's birthday, the 4th of June. The immediate consequences to Burns are amusingly described by himself:—

## BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

ECCLEFECHAN, 7th February 1795.

MY DEAR THOMSON—You cannot have any idea of the predicament in which I write to you. In the course of my duty as supervisor—in which capacity I have acted of late—I came yesternight to this unfortunate, wicked little village.<sup>1</sup> I have gone forward, but snows of ten feet deep have impeded my progress; I have tried to *gae back the gait I cam again*, but the same obstacle has shut me up within insuperable bars. To add to my misfortune, since dinner, a scraper has been torturing catgut, in sounds that would have insulted the dying agonies of a sow under the hands of a butcher, and thinks himself, on that very account, exceeding good company. In fact, I have been in a dilemma, either to get drunk, to forget these miseries; or to hang myself, to get rid of them: like a prudent man—a character congenial to my every thought, word, and deed—I, of two evils, have chosen the least, and am very drunk, at your service!<sup>2</sup>

I wrote you yesterday from Dumfries. I had not time then to tell you all I wanted to say; and, Heaven knows, at present I have not capacity.

<sup>1</sup> Dr Currie remarks, that the poet must have been tipsy indeed to abuse sweet Ecclefechan at this rate.

<sup>2</sup> The handwriting confirms the poet's confession, for it lacks his usual clearness and regularity.

Do you know an air—I am sure you must know it—*We'll gang nae mair to yon Town?* I think, in slowish time, it would make an excellent song. I am highly delighted with it; and if you should think it worthy of your attention, I have a fair dame in my eye, to whom I would consecrate it. Try it with this doggrel—until I give you a better:

## CHORUS.

O wat ye wha's in yon town,  
Ye see the e'enin' sun upon?  
The dearest maid's in yon town  
That e'enin' sun is shinin' on.

O sweet to me yon spreading tree,  
Where Jeanie wanders aft her lane;  
The hawthorn flower that shades her bower,  
Oh, when shall I behold again?

As I am just going to bed, I wish you a good-night.

R. B.

*P. S.*—As I am likely to be storm-staid here to-morrow, if I am in the humour, you shall have a long letter from me.

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## BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

[*Post-mark, February 9*], 1795.

Here is another trial at your favourite:

## O LASSIE, ART THOU SLEEPING YET?

TUNE—*Let me in this ae Night.*

O lassie, art thou sleeping yet?  
Or art thou wakin', I would wit?  
For love has bound me hand and foot,  
And I would fain be in, jo.

## CHORUS.

O let me in this ae night,  
This ae, ae, ae night;  
For pity's sake this ae night,  
O rise and let me in, jo!

Thou hear'st the winter wind and weet,  
Nae star blinks through the driving sleet;  
Tak pity on my weary feet,  
And shield me frac the rain, jo.

The bitter blast that round me blaws  
 Unheeded howls, unheeded fa's;  
 The cauldness o' thy heart's the cause  
 Of a' my grief and pain, jo.

---

## HER ANSWER.

O tell na me o' wind and rain,  
 Upbraid na me wi' cauld disdain;  
 Gae back the gait ye cam again—  
 I winna let ye in, jo!

## CHORUS.

I tell you now this ae night,  
 This ae, ae, ae night;  
 And ance for a' this ae night,  
 I winna let you in, jo!

The snellest blast, at mirkest hours,  
 That round the pathless wanderer pours,  
 Is nocht to what poor she endures,  
 That's trusted faithless man, jo.

The sweetest flower that decked the mead,  
 Now trodden like the vilest weed;  
 Let simple maid the lesson read,  
 The weird may be her ain, jo.

The bird that charmed his summer-day,  
 Is now the cruel fowler's prey;  
 Let witless, trusting woman say  
 How aft her fate's the same, jo!

I do not know whether it will do.

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## MR THOMSON TO BURNS.

25th February 1795.

I HAVE to thank you, my dear sir, for two epistles—one containing *Let me in this ae Night*; and the other from Ecclefechan, proving that, drunk or sober, your 'mind is never muddy.' You have displayed great address in the above song. Her answer is excellent, and at the same time takes away the indelicacy that otherwise would have attached to his entreaties. I like the song, as it now stands, very much.

I had hopes you would be arrested some days at Ecclefechan, and be obliged to beguile the tedious forenoons by song-making. It will give me pleasure to receive the verses you intend for *O wat ye wha's in yon Town?*

Amongst other things snowed up by the storm of February '95, was a Scotch county election. The death of General Stewart in January had created a vacancy in the representation of the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright — a district so closely adjoining to Dumfries, that all its concerns are there deeply felt. A writ had been issued and intrusted to Lord Garlies, M.P., son of the Earl of Galloway; but his lordship kept it back for several weeks, for the ostensible reason, that it was impossible for the electors at such a season to meet for the recording of their votes. Meanwhile, public feeling was strongly excited, the vacant seat being contested between a Tory, under the Galloway influence, and an independent country gentleman of Whig politics. The latter was the same Mr Heron of Kerrougheath whom Burns had visited in June of the past year, soon after his melancholy rencontre with David M' Culloch. He was a benevolent and most respectable man. The candidate in the Tory interest was Mr Gordon of Balmaghie, himself a man of moderate property and influence, but greatly fortified by the favour of his uncle, Mr Murray of Broughton, one of the wealthiest proprietors in the south of Scotland, as well as by the interest of the Earl of Galloway.

It was certainly most unsuitable for Burns to take any part in this conflict, as, while no public duty was neglected by his silence, his partisanship was ten times more likely to do him harm than good. He saw, however, some of his favourite aversions, such as the Earl of Galloway and John Bushby of Tinwald Downs, on the one side, while on the other stood a really worthy man, who had shewn him some kindness, and whose political prepossessions accorded with his own. With his characteristic recklessness, he threw off several ballads, and even caused them to be circulated in print; effusions which must now be deemed of secondary importance in the roll of his works, but which yet are well worthy of preservation for the traits of a keen satiric spirit which mingle with their local and scarcely intelligible allusions :

## BALLADS ON MR HERON'S ELECTION, 1795.

## BALLAD FIRST.

Whom will you send to London town,  
To Parliament and a' that?  
Or wha in a' the country round  
The best deserves to fa' that?

For a' that, and a' that,  
 Through Galloway and a' that ;  
 Where is the laird or belted knight  
 That best deserves to fa' that ?

Wha sees Kerrougghtree's open yett,  
 And wha is't never saw that ?  
 Wha ever wi' Kerrougghtree meets,  
 And has a doubt of a' that ?  
     For a' that, and a' that,  
     Here's Heron yet for a' that !  
     The independent patriot,  
     The honest man, and a' that.

Though wit and worth in either sex,  
 St Mary's Isle can shaw that ;  
 Wi' dukes and lords let Selkirk mix,  
 And weel does Selkirk fa' that.  
     For a' that, and a' that,  
     Here's Heron yet for a' that !  
     The independent commoner  
     Shall be the man for a' that.

But why should we to nobles jouk ?  
 And is't against the law that ?  
 For why, a lord may be a gouk,  
 Wi' ribbon, star, and a' that.  
     For a' that, and a' that,  
     Here's Heron yet for a' that !  
     A lord may be a lousy loun,  
     Wi' ribbon, star, and a' that.<sup>1</sup>

bend

fool

A beardless boy comes o'er the hills,  
 Wi' uncle's purse and a' that,  
 But we'll hae aye frae 'mang oursels,  
 A man we ken, and a' that.  
     For a' that, and a' that,  
     Here's Heron yet for a' that !  
     For we're not to be bought and sold,  
     Like naigs, and nowt, and a' that.

cattle

Then let us drink the Stewartry,  
 Kerrougghtree's laird, and a' that,  
 Our representative to be,  
 For weel he's worthy a' that.

<sup>1</sup> The vituperation in this stanza refers, not to the Selkirk family, for which Burns had a respect, as shewn in the preceding verse, but to the Earl of Galloway.

For a' that, and a' that,  
 Here's Heron yet for a' that !  
 A House of Commons such as he,  
 They would be blest that saw that.

## BALLAD SECOND.

Fy, let us a' to Kirkcudbright,  
 For there will be bickering there ;  
 For Murray's light horse are to muster,  
 And oh, how the heroes will swear !<sup>1</sup>

First, there will be trusty Kerroughtree,<sup>2</sup>  
 Whase honour was ever his law ;  
 If the virtues were packed in a parcel,  
 His worth might be sample for a'.

And strong and respectfu's his backing,  
 The maist o' the lairds wi' him stand ;  
 Nae gipsy-like nominal barons,  
 Whase property's paper, but lands.<sup>3</sup>

For there frae the Niddisdale borders,  
 The Maxwells will gather in droves,  
 Teugh Jockie,<sup>4</sup> stanch Geordie,<sup>5</sup> and Wellwood,<sup>6</sup>  
 That grien's for the fishes and loaves.      longs

And there will be Heron the Major,<sup>7</sup>  
 Wha'll ne'er be forgot in the Greys ;  
 Our flattery we'll keep for some other,  
 Him only 'tis justice to praise.

And there will be Maiden Kilkerran,<sup>8</sup>  
 And also Barskimming's guude knight ;<sup>9</sup>  
 And there will be roaring Birtwhistle,<sup>10</sup>  
 Wha luckily roars i' the right.

<sup>1</sup> This ballad is composed in imitation of a rough but most amusing specimen of the old ballad literature of Scotland, descriptive of the company attending a country wedding—

‘Fy, let us a' to the wedding,  
 For there'll be lilting there,’ &c.

<sup>2</sup> Mr Heron of Kerroughtree, the Whig candidate.

<sup>3</sup> Many of the county electors were, previous to the Reform Act of 1832, possessors of fictitious votes only—often called *paper voters*.

<sup>4</sup> Mr Maxwell of Terraughty, the venerable gentleman on whose birthday Burns wrote some verses. See vol. iii., p. 204.

<sup>5</sup> George Maxwell of Carruchan.

<sup>6</sup> Mr Wellwood Maxwell.

<sup>7</sup> Major Heron, brother of the Whig candidate.

<sup>8</sup> Sir Adam Ferguson of Kilkerran.

<sup>9</sup> Sir William Miller of Barskimming; afterwards a judge under the designation of Lord Glenlee.

<sup>10</sup> Mr Birtwhistle of Kirkcudbright.

Next there will be wealthy young Richard<sup>1</sup>—  
 Dame Fortune should hing by the neck  
 For prodigal thriftless bestowing—  
 His merit had won him respect.

And there will be rich brother nabobs,  
 Though nabobs, yet men of the first;<sup>2</sup>  
 And there will be Collieston's whiskers,<sup>3</sup>  
 And Quintin, o' lads not the warst.<sup>4</sup>

And there will be Stamp-office Johnnie<sup>5</sup>—  
 Take care how ye purchase a dram;  
 And there will be gay Cassencarrie,<sup>6</sup>  
 And there will be gleg Colonel Tam.<sup>7</sup>

And there will be folk frae St Mary's,  
 A house of great merit and note;<sup>8</sup>  
 The deil ane but honours them highly,  
 The deil's few will gie them a vote.

And there'll be Murray commander,<sup>9</sup>  
 And Gordon the battle to win;<sup>10</sup>  
 Like brothers they'll stand by each other,  
 Sae knit in alliance and sin.

And there will be black-lippit Johnnie,<sup>11</sup>  
 The tongue o' the trump to them a';  
 An he gets na hell for his haddin,  
 The deil gets nae justice ava.

And there'll be Kempleton's birkie,<sup>12</sup>  
 A chiel no sae black at the bane;  
 For as for his fine nabob fortune,  
 We'll e'en let that subject alone.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Richard Oswald of Auchincruive.

<sup>2</sup> Messrs Hannay.

<sup>3</sup> Mr Copland of Collieston.

<sup>4</sup> Quintin M'Adam of Craigengillan.

<sup>5</sup> Mr John Syme, distributor of stamps, Dumfries.

<sup>6</sup> of Cassencarrie.

<sup>7</sup> Colonel Goldie of Goldielea.

<sup>8</sup> The family of the Earl of Selkirk.

<sup>9</sup> Mr Murray of Broughton. This gentleman had left his wife, and eloped with a lady of rank. Large fortune had allowed him to do this with comparative impunity, and even without forfeiting the alliance of his wife's relations, one of whom he was supporting in this election.

<sup>10</sup> Mr Gordon of Balmaghie, the government candidate.

<sup>11</sup> Mr John Bushby.

<sup>12</sup> William Bushby of Kempleton, brother of John. He had been involved in the ruinous affair of Douglas, Heron, & Co.'s Bank, and had subsequently gone to India, where he realised a fortune.

<sup>13</sup> Var.—For now what he wan in the Indies,  
 Has scoured up the laddie fu' clean.

And there'll be Wigton's new sheriff,<sup>1</sup>  
 Dame Justice fu' brawly has sped;  
 She's gotten the heart o' a Bushby,  
 But, Lord! what's become o' the head?

And there'll be Cardoness Esquire,<sup>2</sup>  
 Sae mighty in Cardoness' eyes,  
 A wight that will weather damnation,  
 For the devil the prey will despise.

And there is our king's lord-lieutenant,  
 So famed for his grateful return;  
 The birkie is getting his questions,  
 To say in St Stephen's the morn.

And there will be Douglasses doughty,  
 New-christening towns far and near;<sup>3</sup>  
 Abjuring their democrat doings,  
 By kissing the —— of a peer.

And there'll be lads o' the gospel;  
 Muirhead, wha's as gude as he's true;<sup>4</sup>  
 And there'll be Buittle's apostle,  
 Wha's mair o' the black than the blue.<sup>5</sup>

And there'll be Kenmure sae generous,<sup>6</sup>  
 Whase honour is proof to the storm;  
 To save them frae stark reprobation,  
 He lent them his name to the firm.

And there'll be Logan M'Dowall,<sup>7</sup>  
 Sculduddery and he will be there;  
 And also the wild Scot o' Galloway,  
 Sodgering gunpowder Blair.<sup>8</sup>

But we winna mention Redcastle,<sup>9</sup>  
 The body, e'en let him escape!  
 He'd venture the gallows for siller,  
 An' 'twere na' the cost o' the rape.

<sup>1</sup> Mr Bushby Maitland, son of John, and newly appointed sheriff of Wigtonshire. The same idea occurs in *The Epistle of Esopus to Maria*.

<sup>2</sup> David Maxwell of Cardoness.

<sup>3</sup> The Messrs Douglas, brothers, of Carlinwark (new-christened by them Castle-Douglas) and Orchardton.

<sup>4</sup> Rev. Mr Muirhead, minister of Urr.

<sup>5</sup> Rev. George Maxwell, minister of Buittle.

<sup>6</sup> Mr Gordon of Kenmure.

<sup>7</sup> Captain M'Dowall of Logan, the hero of *Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonny Doon*.

<sup>8</sup> Mr Blair of Dunskey.

<sup>9</sup> Walter Sloan Lawrie of Redcastle.

Then hey the chaste interest o' Broughton,  
 And hey for the blessings 'twill bring!  
 It may send Balmaghie to the Commons,  
 In Sodom 'twould make him a king.

And hey for the sanctified Murray,  
 Our land who wi' chapels has stored;  
 He founder'd his horse among harlots,  
 But gied the auld naig to the Lord.

Though Burns had, we may well believe, anything but a view to his own interest in writing these diatribes, it appears that there resulted from them some little glimpse of a hope of promotion. Mr Heron, hearing of them, and having perused one, wrote to Mr Syme, with some references to the poet, as if it were not impossible that he might be able to advance his interests.

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#### TO MR HERON OF HERON.

SIR—I enclose you some copies of a couple of political ballads, one of which, I believe, you have never seen. Would to Heaven I could make you master of as many votes in the Stewartry—but—

Who does the utmost that he can,  
 Does well, acts nobly—angels could no more.

In order to bring my humble efforts to bear with more effect on the foe, I have privately printed a good many copies of both ballads, and have sent them among friends all about the country.

To pillory on Parnassus the rank reprobation of character, the utter dereliction of all principle, in a profligate junto, which has not only outraged virtue, but violated common decency, spurning even hypocrisy as paltry iniquity below their daring—to unmask their flagitiousness to the broadest day—to deliver such over to their merited fate—is surely not merely innocent, but laudable; is not only propriety, but virtue. You have already, as your auxiliary, the sober detestation of mankind on the heads of your opponents; and I swear by the lyre of Thalia, to muster on your side all the votaries of honest laughter, and fair, candid ridicule.

I am extremely obliged to you for your kind mention of my interests in a letter which Mr Syme shewed me. At present, my situation in life must be in a great measure stationary, at least for two or three years. The statement is this—I am on the supervisors' list, and as we come on there by precedence, in two or three years I shall be at the head of that list, and be appointed *of course*. Then, a FRIEND might be of service to me in getting me into a place of the kingdom which I would like. A supervisor's income varies from about a hundred and twenty to two hundred a year; but the business is an incessant drudgery, and would be nearly a complete bar to every species of literary pursuit. The moment I am appointed

supervisor, in the common routine, I may be nominated on the collector's list; and this is always a business purely of political patronage. A collectorship varies much, from better than two hundred a year to near a thousand. They also come forward by precedence on the list; and have, besides a handsome income, a life of complete leisure. A life of literary leisure, with a decent competency, is the summit of my wishes. It would be the prudish affectation of silly pride in me to say that I do not need, or would not be indebted to, a political friend; at the same time, sir, I by no means lay my affairs before you thus, to hook my dependent situation on your benevolence. If, in my progress of life, an opening should occur where the good offices of a gentleman of your public character and political consequence might bring me forward, I shall petition your goodness with the same frankness as I now do myself the honour to subscribe myself,

R. B.

After the election, which was decided in Mr Heron's favour, Burns could not resist the temptation to raise a pæan of triumph over the discomfited earl and his factotum Bushby:

## JOHN BUSHBY'S LAMENTATION.

TUNE—*The Babes in the Wood.*

'Twas in the seventeen hunder year  
O' grace and ninety-five,  
That year I was the wae'est man  
O' ony man alive.

In March the three-and-twentieth morn,  
The sun raise clear and bright;  
But oh I was a waefu' man  
Ere to-fa' o' the night.

Yerl Galloway lang did rule this land,  
Wi' *equal* right and fame,  
And thereto was his kinsman joined  
The Murray's noble name.<sup>1</sup>

Yerl Galloway lang did rule the land,  
Made me the judge o' strife;  
But now Yerl Galloway's sceptre's broke,  
And eke my hangman's knife.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Var.—Fast knit in chaste and haly bands,  
Wi' Broughton's noble name.

<sup>2</sup> Var.—Earl Galloway's man o' men was I,  
And chief o' Broughton's host;  
So twa blind beggars on a string  
The faithfu' tyke will trust.  
But now Earl Galloway's sceptre's broke,  
And Broughton's wi' the slain,  
And I my ancient craft may try,  
Sin' honesty is gane.

'Twas by the banks o' bonnie Dee,  
 Beside Kirkcudbright's towers,  
 The Stewart and the Murray there  
 Did muster a' their powers.

The Murray, on the auld gray yaud,  
 Wi' wingèd spurs did ride,<sup>1</sup>  
 That auld gray yaud, yea,<sup>2</sup> Nidsdale rade,  
 He staw upon Nidside. stole

An' there had na been the yerl himsel',  
 O there had been nae play;  
 But Garlies was to London gane,  
 And sae the kye might stray.

And there was Balmaghie, I ween,  
 In front rank he wad shine;  
 But Balmaghie had better been  
 Drinking Madeira wine.

Frae the<sup>3</sup> Glenkens came to our aid,  
 A chief o' doughty deed;  
 In case that worth should wanted be,  
 O' Kenmure we had need.

And by our banners marched Muirhead,  
 And Buittle was na slack;  
 Whase haly priesthood name can stain,  
 For wha can dye the black?

And there sae grave Squire Cardoness,  
 Looked on till a' was done;  
 Sae, in the tower o' Cardoness,  
 A howlet sits at noon.

And there led I the Bushby clan,  
 My gamesome billie Will;  
 And my son Maitland, wise as brave,  
 My footsteps followed still.

The Douglas and the Heron's name  
 We set nougnt to their score;  
 The Douglas and the Heron's name  
 Had felt our weight<sup>4</sup> before.

<sup>1</sup> An obscure allusion to the lady with whom Murray had eloped—a member of the house of Johnston, whose well-known crest is a winged spur.

<sup>2</sup> Var.—a.

<sup>3</sup> Var.—And fra.

<sup>4</sup> Var.—Might.

But Douglasses o' weight had we,  
 The pair o' lusty lairds,  
 For building cot-houses sae famed,  
 And christening kail-yards.

And there Redcastle drew his sword,  
 That ne'er was stained wi' gore,  
 Save on a wanderer lame and blind,  
 To drive him frae his door.

And last came creeping C——l——n,  
 Was mair in fear than wrath;  
 Ae knave was constant in his mind,  
 To keep that knave frae scaith. \* \* \*

The country gentlemen submitted to these diatribes of Burns with probably no great difficulty, his social position making him no proper object for ostensible resentment. There was, however, a clergyman amongst the victims, a vigorous-minded, somewhat eccentric personage, his name and description being, the Rev. James Muirhead, minister of Urr. Landed property and a pedigree singled this gentleman out from the class to which he belonged. He took a pride in considering himself as the chief of the Muirheads, and his neighbours had of course heard a good deal of his family heraldry. Burns introduced him in the second of these ballads by the single line—

‘Muirhead, wha’s as gude as he’s true.’

He also figures in the third ballad, under a still more pointed allusion. Muirhead, who had lived with the Edinburgh wits, Dr Gilbert Stuart and Dr John Brown, was himself a scribbler of epigrams and lampoons, and little disposed to receive Burns’s venomous darts with Christian meekness. He caused a small *brochure* to be printed in Edinburgh, commencing thus:

‘The ancient poets, all agree,  
 Sang sweeter far than modern we,  
 In this, besides, their racy rhymes  
 Were told in far, far fewer lines,’ &c.

Then he quoted—

MARTIALIS LIBER XI., EP. 66.

IN VACERRAM.

‘Et delator es, et calumniator;  
 Et fraudator es, et negotiator:  
 Et fellator es, et lanista: miror  
 Quare non habeas, Vacerra, nummos.’

Followed a translation, or rather paraphrase:

' Vacerras, shabby son of w——,  
 Why do thy patrons keep thee poor?  
 Bribe-worthy service thou canst boast,  
 At once their bulwark and their post;  
 Thou art a sycophant, a traitor,  
 A liar, a calumniator,  
 Who conscience (hadst thou that) would sell,  
 Nay, lave the common sewer of hell,  
 For whisky: Eke, most precious imp,  
 Thou art a rhymster, gauger, pimp;  
 Whence comes it, then, Vacerras, that  
 Thou still art poor as a church-rat?'

This is a curiosity, not merely as a specimen of clerical bitterness, but as almost the only known contemporary satire on Burns which obtained the honours of print. It will be found that our bard made a rejoinder.<sup>1</sup>

In the early part of 1795, two companies of volunteers were raised by Dumfries, as its quota towards the stationary troops which were found necessary at that crisis, when the regular army was chiefly engaged in maintaining external warfare against France.<sup>2</sup> Many a liberal who had incurred the wrath or suspicion of the government and its friends, was glad to enrol himself in these corps, in order to prove that he bore a sound heart towards his country. Syme, Dr Maxwell, and others of the Dumfries Whigs, took this step, and Burns also joined the corps, though, according

<sup>1</sup> 'It consists with my knowledge, that no publication in answer to the scurribilities of Burns ever did him so much harm in public opinion, or made Burns himself feel so sore, as Dr Muirhead's translation of Martial's epigram. When I remonstrated with the doctor against his printing and circulating that translation, I asked him how he proved that Vacerras was a gauger as well as Burns. He answered: "Martial calls him *fellator*, which means a *sucker*, or a man who drinks from the cask."—From a MS., by the late Alexander Young, Esq., W.S., Edinburgh.

[Died, May 16, 1808] at Spottes Hall, Dunscore, the Rev. Dr James Muirhead, minister of Urr, in the sixty-eighth year of his age, and thirty-eighth of his ministry.—*Magazine Obituary*.

<sup>2</sup> 'War Office, March 24 (1795).—Dumfriesshire Corps of Volunteers. A. S. De Peyster, Esq., to be Major Commandant; John Hamilton and John Finnian, Esq., Captains; David Newall and Wellwood Maxwell, gent., First Lieutenants; Francis Shortt and Thomas White, gent., Second Lieutenants.'—*Gazette*.

On the king's birthday, a set of colours, prepared by Mrs De Peyster, wife of the commandant, was presented in a ceremonious manner to the Dumfries Volunteers, in the square where the Duke of Queensberry's monument stands. The Rev. Mr Burnside, one of the clergymen of the town, said a prayer on the occasion, and complimented the corps on its good discipline, which he said had been mainly owing to De Peyster's assiduity in drilling. 'At four o'clock, the whole Volunteers, and a number of other gentlemen, were entertained at dinner in the King's Arms by the magistrates; and at five the company adjourned to the court-house, where the king's health was drunk, and other loyal and constitutional toasts suited to the occasion. The whole day was spent in the utmost harmony,' &c.

—*Dumfries Journal*, June 9, 1795.

to Allan Cunningham, not without opposition from some of the haughty Tories, who demurred about his political opinions. ‘I remember well,’ says Cunningham, ‘the appearance of that respectable corps; their odd, but not ungraceful dress; white kerseymere breeches and waistcoat; short blue coat, faced with red; and round hat, surmounted by a bearskin, like the helmets of our Horse-guards; and I remember the poet also—his very swarthy face, his ploughman stoop, his large dark eyes, and his indifferent dexterity in the handling of his arms.’ The poet made a further and more public demonstration of his sentiments about Gallic propagandism, by penning his well-known song—

## THE DUMFRIES VOLUNTEERS.

## **TUNE—Push about the Jorum.**

Does haughty Gaul invasion threat?  
Then let the loons beware, sir;  
There's wooden walls upon our seas,  
And volunteers on shore, sir.  
The Nith shall run to Corsincon,<sup>1</sup>  
And Criffel<sup>2</sup> sink in Solway,  
Ere we permit a foreign foe  
On British ground to rally!  
Fall de rall, &c.

Oh, let us not like snarling tykes  
In wrangling be divided;  
Till, slap, come in an unco loon,  
And wi' a rung decide it.  
Be Britain still to Britain true,  
Among oursels united;  
For never but by British hands  
Maun British wrangs be righted.  
Fall de rall, &c.

The kettle o' the Kirk and State,  
Perhaps a clout may fail in't;  
But deil a foreign tinkler loon  
Shall ever ca' a nail in't.  
Our fathers' bluid the kettle bought,  
And wha wad dare to spoil it;  
By Heaven, the sacrilegious dog  
Shall fuel be to boil it.  
Fall de rall, &c.

<sup>1</sup> A high hill at the source of the Nith.—*B.*

<sup>2</sup> A well-known mountain near the mouth of the Nith.

The wretch that wad a tyrant own,  
 And the wretch his true-born brother,  
 Wl' 'ould set the *mob* aboon the *throne*,  
 May they be damned together!  
 Who will not sing 'God save the King,'  
 Shall hang as high's the steeple;  
 But while we sing 'God save the King,'  
 We'll ne'er forget the People.

This ballad appears in the *Dumfries Journal* of 5th May, whence it was quickly transferred into other newspapers. So decided a declaration in behalf of order, joined with so guarded, yet so felicitous an assertion of popular principles, ought to have secured some share of government favour for Burns. In the same spirit, and in much the same phraseology, was an epigram which he is said to have given forth at a festive meeting to celebrate Rodney's victory of the 12th of April.

#### TOAST FOR THE 12TH OF APRIL.

Instead of a song, boys, I'll give you a toast—  
 Here's the memory of those on the twelfth that we lost!—  
 That we lost, did I say? nay, by Heaven, that we found;  
 For their fame it shall last while the world goes round.  
 The next in succession, I'll give you—the King!  
 Whoe'er would betray him, on high may he swing;  
 And here's the grand fabric, our free Constitution,  
 As built on the base of the great Revolution;  
 And longer with polities not to be crammed,  
 Be Anarchy cursed, and be Tyranny damned;  
 And who would to Liberty e'er prove disloyal,  
 May his son be a hangman, and he his first trial!

Cunningham says of the invasion-song, that 'it hit the taste, and suited the feelings of the humbler classes, who added to it the *Poor and Honest Sodger*, the *Song of Death*, and *Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled*. Hills echoed with it; it was heard in every street, and did more to right the mind of the rustic part of the population, than all the speeches of Pitt and Dundas, or the chosen Five-and-Forty.' Assuming this to have been the case, it might well seem strange that the Scottish minister who has been named, in his abundant benevolence towards Scotland, never extended the slightest patronage towards one from whom Scotland derived more honour than from any other of her living sons.

We do not find, indeed, that from the first to last of Burns's career, any movement was made in high quarters to distinguish him by state patronage. We have no trace of his ever having

attracted the slightest attention from the royal family. No minister smiled upon him. Scarcely a single Tory noble or gentleman granted him further grace than a subscription for his poems. All his active patrons among the great were of the Whig party, men destitute of the power of advancing him beyond the humble function to which the favour of one of them had condemned him. His receiving no ray of state favour is the more remarkable, since it appears that Mr Addington entertained a most earnest feeling of interest in the poetry of the Scottish ploughman, and that his strains had touched even the temperate bosom of Mr Pitt. Mr Lockhart had learned, apparently on good authority, that the latter statesman spoke thus of the productions of Burns, at the table of Lord Liverpool, not long after the death of the hapless bard: ‘I can think of no verse since Shakspeare’s that has so much the appearance of coming sweetly from nature.’<sup>1</sup> Allan Cunningham had learned that Mr Addington reminded Pitt of the deservings of the poet in his lifetime; but Pitt ‘pushed the bottle to Lord Melville, and did nothing.’<sup>2</sup> Mr Lockhart adds very justly: ‘Had Burns put forth some newspaper squibs upon Lepaux and Carnot, or a smart pamphlet “On the State of the Country,” he might have been more attended to in his lifetime. It is common to say: “What is everybody’s business is nobody’s business;” but one may be pardoned for thinking that, in such cases as this, that which the general voice of the country does admit to be everybody’s business, comes, in fact, to be the business of those whom the nation intrusts with national concerns.’

The fact is, that no man allying himself to the Whigs could in those days be tolerated by the ministry. Burns, though practically demonstrating his attachment to the general fabric of the constitution, made no secret at the same time of his wishing to see it in other hands than those in which it now rested. This was enough. We see the earnestness of his sentiments, even in the volunteering crisis, in a letter which has come down to us without any address, but which seems to have enveloped the election ballads to some Whig gentleman—probably Mr Oswald of Auchincruive, a young Ayrshire squire of great wealth, now living near Dumfries, and whom he had lately met:<sup>3</sup>

TO [RICHARD A. OSWALD, ESQ.]

DUMFRIES, 23d April 1795.

SIR—You see the danger of patronising the rhyming tribe: you flatter the poet’s vanity—a most potent ingredient in the composition

<sup>1</sup> Lockhart’s *Life of Burns*, p. 227.

<sup>2</sup> Cunningham’s *Life of Burns*, p. 262.

<sup>3</sup> The letter has lately been found among the papers of the Auchincruive family.

of a son of rhyme—by a little notice; and he, in return, persecutes your good-nature with his acquaintance. In these days of volunteering, I have come forward with my services, as poet-laureate to a highly respectable political party, of which you are a distinguished member. The enclosed are, I hope, only a beginning to the songs of triumph which you will earn in that contest.—I have the honour to be, sir, your obliged and devoted humble servant,

R. BURNS.

About the same time, he wrote a song upon the beautiful young wife of Mr Oswald, and sent it to Mr Syme, enclosed in the following letter :—

TO JOHN SYME, ESQ.

You know that, among other high dignities, you have the honour to be my supreme court of critical judicature, from which there is no appeal. I enclose you a song which I composed since I saw you, and I am going to give you the history of it. Do you know that among much that I admire in the characters and manners of those great folks whom I have now the honour to call my acquaintances, the Oswald family, there is nothing charms me more than Mr Oswald's unconcealable attachment to that incomparable woman? Did you ever, my dear Syme, meet with a man who owed more to the Divine Giver of all good things than Mr O.? A fine fortune; a pleasing exterior; self-evident amiable dispositions, and an ingenuous, upright mind, and that informed, too, much beyond the usual run of young fellows of his rank and fortune: and to all this, such a woman!—but of her I shall say nothing at all, in despair of saying anything adequate. In my song, I have endeavoured to do justice to what would be his feelings, on seeing, in the scene I have drawn, the habitation of his Lucy. As I am a good deal pleased with my performance, I in my first fervour thought of sending it to Mrs Oswald, but on second thoughts, perhaps what I offer as the honest incense of genuine respect, might, from the well-known character of poverty and poetry, be construed into some modification or other of that servility which my soul abhors. Do let me know some convenient moment, ere the worthy family leave the town, that I, with propriety, may wait on them. In the circle of the fashionable herd, those who come either to shew their own consequence, or to borrow consequence from the visit—in such a mob I will not appear: mine is a different errand.—Yours,

ROBT. BURNS.

The song enclosed was that which follows. It is curious that, when lately commenced, he had assigned the name *Jeanie* to the heroine, apparently having a totally different person in his eye. We have seen that it was no unusual thing with him to shift the devotion of verse from one person to another, or to make one poem serve as a compliment to more than one individual.

## OH, WAT YE WHA'S IN YON TOWN?

TUNE—*We'll gang nae mair to yon Town.*

Oh, wat ye wha's in yon town,  
Ye see the e'enin' sun upon?  
The fairest dame's in yon town,  
That e'enin' sun is shining on.

Now haply down yon gay green shaw,  
She wanders by yon spreading tree;  
How blest ye flowers that round her blaw,  
Ye catch the glances o' her ee!

How blest ye birds that round her sing,  
And welcome in the blooming year!  
And doubly welcome be the spring,  
The season to my Lucy dear.

The sun blinks blithe on yon town,  
And on yon bonnie braes of Ayr;  
But my delight in yon town,  
And dearest bliss,<sup>1</sup> is Lucy fair.

Without my love, not a' the charms  
O' Paradise could yield me joy;  
But gie me Lucy in my arms,  
And welcome Lapland's dreary sky!

My cave wad be a lover's bower,  
Though raging winter rent the air;  
And she a lovely little flower,  
That I wad tent and shelter there.

Oh, sweet is she in yon town,  
Yon sinkin' sun's gane down upon;  
A fairer than's in yon town  
His setting beam ne'er shone upon.

If angry fate is sworn my foe,  
And suffering I am doomed to bear;  
I careless quit aught else below,  
But spare me—spare me, Lucy dear!

For while life's dearest blood is warm,  
Ae thought frae her shall ne'er depart,  
And she—as fairest is her form!  
She has the truest, kindest heart!

<sup>1</sup> In original manuscript, 'joy.'

Lucy Johnston, daughter of Wynne Johnston, Esq., of Hilton, was married 23d April 1793, to Richard Alexander Oswald, Esq., of Auchincruive, in the county of Ayr. A portrait of the lady adorns the work entitled *The Land of Burns*, where a brief notice of her is wound up as follows: ‘Alas for beauty, fortune, affection, and hopes! This lovely and accomplished woman had not blessed Mr Oswald above a year beyond this period, when she fell into pulmonary consumption. A removal to a warmer climate was tried, in the hope of restoring health, but she died at Lisbon, in January 1798, at an age little exceeding thirty.’

It appears from this letter, that Burns was in the habit of submitting his verses to the judgment of his friend Syme, and abiding by the decision. It may be added, that he had likewise a critical friend in Collector Mitchell, who, having been educated for the church, possessed a mind not ill qualified to judge of literary compositions. At his death, a whole sheaf of first copies of poems and songs by Burns was found in the collector’s repositories, on which it was understood that he had been asked to give his opinion. The bundle was lost by the family, and has never since been heard of.

I had an opportunity, in 1826, of conversing with Mr Syme regarding Burns. He was a very good specimen of the Scotch gentleman of the latter part of the eighteenth century—a good deal of the bon-vivant, yet intelligent, well-bred, and full of anecdote. He referred with pride and pleasure to the meetings he had had with Burns in the same room in which I now found him living (in a villa called Ryedale, on the Galloway side of the river.) He expatiated on the electric flashes of the poet’s eloquence at table, and on the burning satiric shafts which he was accustomed to launch at those whom he disliked, or who betrayed any affectation or meanness in their conversation. I particularly remember the old gentleman glowing over the discomfiture of a too considerate Amphytryon, who, when entertaining himself, Burns, and some others, lingered with screw in hand over a fresh bottle of claret, which he evidently wished to be forbidden to draw—till Burns transfixes him by a comparison of his present position with that of Abraham lingering over the filial sacrifice. Another souvenir of the poet’s wit referred to a person who bored a company for a considerable time with references to the many great people he had lately been visiting—

No more of your titled acquaintances boast,  
And in what lordly circles you’ve been:  
An insect is still but an insect at most,  
Though it crawl on the head of a queen.

Mr Syme, in 1829, thus wrote regarding the personal appearance of Burns at the time of their intimacy: 'The poet's expression varied perpetually, according to the idea that predominated in his mind; and it was beautiful to remark how well the play of his lips indicated the sentiment he was about to utter. His eyes and lips, the first remarkable for fire, and the second for flexibility, formed at all times an index to his mind, and, as sunshine or shade predominated, you might have told, *a priori*, whether the company was to be favoured with a scintillation of wit, or a sentiment of benevolence, or a burst of fiery indignation . . . I cordially concur with what Sir Walter Scott says of the poet's eyes. In his animated moments, and particularly when his anger was roused by instances of tergiversation, meanness, or tyranny, they were *actually like coals of living fire*.'

There is evidence from the bard himself, that he both looked up to Mr Syme as a judge of literature, and loved him as a companion. Sending him a dozen of porter from the Jerusalem Tavern of Dumfries, Burns accompanied the gift with a complimentary note—

Oh, had the malt thy strength of mind,  
Or hops the flavour of thy wit,  
'Twere drink for first of human kind,  
A gift that even for Syme were fit.

At Syme's own house, being pressed to stay and drink more, Burns hesitated; then taking up a tumbler, he scribbled on it—

There's Death in the cup, sae beware—  
Nay, mair, there is danger in touching;  
But wha can avoid the fell snare?  
The man and his wine's sae bewitching.

So late as the 17th December 1795, when Burns was in declining health, being invited by Syme to dine, with a promise of the best company and the best cookery, he accompanied his apology with a similar compliment—

No more of your guests, be they titled or not,  
And cookery the first in the nation;  
Who is proof to thy personal converse and wit,  
Is proof to all other temptation.

Syme possessed vivid talents, which Dr Currie regarded with such respect, that he pressed him to undertake the editing of the poet's life and writings. That he was also a man of probity and

honour; a long respectable life fully testifies. Yet it is also true, that Mr Syme, like many other men of lively temperament, could not boast of a historical accuracy of narration. He most undoubtedly was carried away by his imagination in his statement regarding the composition of Bruce's Address to his troops. So also he appears to have been in a story, of which several versions have been given to the public. It relates to a conversation on some particulars of Burns's personal conduct, which took place in one of their social evenings at Ryedale. 'I might have spoken daggers,' says Mr Syme, 'but I did not mean them: Burns shook to the inmost fibre of his frame, and drew his sword-cane, when I exclaimed: "What! wilt thou thus, and in mine own house?" The poor fellow was so stung with remorse, that he dashed himself down on the floor.' This anecdote having been unlucky communicated to the public in an article in the *Quarterly Review* by Sir Walter Scott, an undue importance has come to be attached to it. When the matter was rigidly investigated, nothing more could be substantiated than that Syme and Burns had one evening become foolishly serious in the midst of their merry-making—that some allusions by the one to the sins or irregularities of the other, led to a piece of mock-heroic very suitable to the occasion, Burns touching the head of his sword-cane, as implying that his honour might be avenged for any indignity, and Syme making a corresponding tragic start, with the words: 'What! in mine own house?' It was very natural for Mr Syme to retain but an obscure recollection of the incident; but he cannot be acquitted of culpable incautiousness in allowing it to come before the world with a shade of seriousness attached to what never was more than a piece of rodomontade.

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BURNS TO MR THOMSON.<sup>1</sup>

[After transcribing the song, *Oh, wat ye wha's in yon Town?* the poet goes on:—]

Your objection to the last two stanzas of my song, *Let me in this ae Night*, does not strike me as just. You will take notice, that my heroine is replying quite at her ease, and when she talks of 'faithless man,' she gives not the least reason to believe that she speaks from her own experience, but merely from observation of what she has seen around her. But of all boring matters in this boring world, criticising my own works is the greatest bore.

<sup>1</sup> In original, there is no date or post-mark. Currie gives as a date May 1795.

## ADDRESS TO THE WOODLARK.

TUNE—*Where'll bonnie Ann lie?* or, *Loch-Erroch Side.*

O stay, sweet warbling woodlark, stay!  
 Nor quit for me the trembling spray;  
 A hapless lover courts thy lay,  
 Thy soothing, fond complaining.

Again, again that tender part,  
 That I may catch thy melting art;  
 For surely that wad touch her heart,  
 Wha kills me wi' disdaining.

Say, was thy little mate unkind,  
 And heard thee as the careless wind?  
 Oh! nocht but love and sorrow joined,  
 Sic notes o' wo could wauken.

Thou tells o' never-ending care;  
 O' speechless grief, and dark despair:  
 For pity's sake, sweet bird, nae mair,  
 Or my poor heart is broken!

Let me know, your very first leisure, how you like this song.<sup>1</sup>

## ON CHLORIS BEING ILL.

TUNE—*Aye wakin O.*

## CHORUS.

Long, long the night,  
 Heavy comes the morrow,  
 While my soul's delight  
 Is on her bed of sorrow.

Can I cease to care?  
 Can I cease to languish?  
 While my darling fair  
 Is on the couch of anguish?

Every hope is fled,  
 Every fear is terror;  
 Slumber even I dread;  
 Every dream is horror.

<sup>1</sup> This sentence appears in Currie's edition, but not in the original manuscript.

Hear me, Powers divine !  
 Oh, in pity hear me !  
 Take aught else of mine,  
 But my Chloris spare me !

How do you like the foregoing? The Irish air, *Humours of Glen*, is a great favourite of mine, and as, except the silly stuff in the *Poor Soldier*, there are not any decent verses for it, I have written for it as follows :—

## THEIR GROVES O' SWEET MYRTLE.

TUNE—*Humours of Glen.*

Their groves o' sweet myrtle let foreign lands reckon,  
 Where bright-beaming summers exalt the perfume ;  
 Far dearer to me yon lone glen o' green breckan, fern  
 Wi' the burn stealing under the lang yellow broom.

Far dearer to me are yon humble broom bowers,  
 Where the blue-bell and gowan lurk lowly unseen :  
 For there, lightly tripping amang the wild-flowers,  
 A listening the linnet, aft wanders my Jean.

Though rich is the breeze in their gay sunny valleys,  
 And cauld Caledonia's blast on the wave ;  
 Their sweet-scented woodlands that skirt the proud palace,  
 What are they ?—the haunt of the tyrant and slave!

The slave's spicy forests, and gold-bubbling fountains,  
 The brave Caledonian views wi' disdain ;  
 He wanders as free as the winds of his mountains,  
 Save love's willing fetters—the chains o' his Jean !

Yours,

R. B.

P.S.—Stop! turn over.

## 'TWAS NA HER BONNIE BLUE EE WAS MY RUIN.

TUNE—*Laddie, lie near me.*

'Twas na her bonnie blue ee was my ruin ;  
 Fair though she be, that was ne'er my undoing :  
 'Twas the dear smile when naebody did mind us,  
 'Twas the bewitching, sweet, stown glance o' kindness.

Sair do I fear that to hope is denied me,  
 Sair do I fear that despair maun abide me ;  
 But though fell fortune should fate us to sever,  
 Queen shall she be in my bosom for ever !

Mary, I'm thine wi' a passion sincerest,  
 And thou hast plighted me love o' the dearest !  
 And thou'rt the angel that never can alter,  
 Sooner the sun in his motion would falter.

Let me hear from you.

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## MR THOMSON TO BURNS.

You must not think, my good sir, that I have any intention to enhance the value of my gift, when I say, in justice to the ingenious and worthy artist, that the design and execution of the *Cotter's Saturday Night* is, in my opinion, one of the happiest productions of Allan's pencil. I shall be grievously disappointed if you are not quite pleased with it.

The figure intended for your portrait, I think strikingly like you, as far as I can remember your phiz. This should make the piece interesting to your family every way. Tell me whether Mrs Burns finds you out among the figures.

I cannot express the feeling of admiration with which I have read your pathetic *Address to the Woodlark*, your elegant panegyric on Caledonia, and your affecting verses on Chloris's illness. Every repeated perusal of these gives new delight. The other song to *Laddie, lie near me*, though not equal to these, is very pleasing.

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## BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

[Post-mark, May 9,] 1795.

## HOW CRUEL ARE THE PARENTS !

ALTERED FROM AN OLD ENGLISH SONG.

TUNE—*John Anderson my Jo.*

How cruel are the parents,  
 Who riches only prize ;  
 And to the wealthy booby,  
 Poor woman sacrifice !  
 Meanwhile, the hapless daughter  
 Has but a choice of strife ;—  
 To shun a tyrant father's hate,  
 Become a wretched wife.  
 The ravening hawk pursuing,  
 The trembling dove thus flies,  
 To shun impelling ruin  
 Awhile her pinions tries :  
 Till of escape despairing,  
 No shelter or retreat,  
 She trusts the ruthless falconer,  
 And drops beneath his feet.

## MARK YONDER POMP OF COSTLY FASHION.

TUNE—*Deil tak the Wars.*

Mark yonder pomp of costly fashion,  
 Round the wealthy, titled bride :  
 But when compared with real passion,  
   Poor is all that princely pride.  
   What are the showy treasures ?  
   What are the noisy pleasures ?  
 The gay gaudy glare of vanity and art :  
   The polished jewel's blaze  
   May draw the wondering gaze,  
   And courtly grandeur bright  
   The fancy may delight,  
 But never, never can come near the heart.

But did you see my dearest Chloris,  
   In simplicity's array ;  
 Lovely as yonder sweet opening flower is,  
   Shrinking from the gaze of day.  
   Oh then, the heart alarming,  
   And all resistless charming,  
 In Love's delightful fetters she chains the willing soul !  
   Ambition would disown  
   The world's imperial crown,  
   Even Avarice would deny  
   His worshipped deity,  
 And feel through every vein Love's raptures roll.

Well! this is not amiss. You see how I answer your orders—your tailor could not be more punctual. I am just now in a high fit for poetising, provided that the strait-jacket of criticism don't cure me. If you can, in a post or two, administer a little of the intoxicating potion of your applause, it will raise your humble servant's frenzy to any height you want. I am at this moment 'holding high converse' with the Muses, and have not a word to throw away on such a prosaic dog as you are.

## BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

*May 1795.*

TEN thousand thanks for your elegant present—though I am ashamed of the value of it being bestowed on a man who has not, by any means, merited such an instance of kindness. I have shewn it to two or three judges of the first abilities here, and they all agree with me in classing it as a first-rate production. My phiz is sae

kenspeckle, that the very joiner's apprentice, whom Mrs Burns employed to break up the parcel (I was out of town that day), knew it at once. My most grateful compliments to Allan, who has honoured my rustic Muse so much with his masterly pencil. One strange coincidence is, that the little one who is making the felonious attempt on the cat's tail, is the most striking likeness of an ill-deedie, d—n'd, wee, rumble-gairie urchin of mine, whom, from that propensity to witty wickedness, and manfu' mischief, which, even at twa days' auld, I foresaw would form the striking features of his disposition, I named Willie Nicol, after a certain friend of mine, who is one of the masters of a grammar-school in a city which shall be nameless. Several people think that Allan's likeness of me is more striking than Nasmyth's, for which I sat to him half-a-dozen times. However, there is an artist of considerable merit just now in this town, who has hit the most remarkable likeness of what I am at this moment, that I think ever was taken of anybody. It is a small miniature, and as it will be in your town getting itself be-crystallised, &c. I have some thoughts of suggesting to you to prefix a vignette taken from it to my song, *Contented wi' Little and Canty wi' Mair*, in order the portrait of my face and the picture of my mind may go down the stream of time together.

Give the enclosed epigram to my much-valued friend Cunningham, and tell him, that on Wednesday I go to visit a friend of his, to whom his friendly partiality in speaking of me in a manner introduced me—I mean a well-known military and literary character, Colonel Dirom.

You do not tell me how you liked my two last songs. Are they condemned?

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#### MR THOMSON TO BURNS.

13th May 1795.

It gives me great pleasure to find that you are all so well satisfied with Mr Allan's production. The chance resemblance of your little fellow, whose promising disposition appeared so very early, and suggested whom he should be named after, is curious enough. I am acquainted with that person, who is a prodigy of learning and genius, and a pleasant fellow, though no saint.

You really make me blush, when you tell me you have not merited the drawing from me. I do not think I can ever repay you, or sufficiently esteem and respect you, for the liberal and kind manner in which you have entered into the spirit of my undertaking, which could not have been perfected without you. So I beg you would not make a fool of me again by speaking of obligation.

I like your two last songs very much, and am happy to find you are in such a high fit of poetising. Long may it last! Clarke has made a fine pathetic air to Mallet's superlative ballad of *William and Margaret*, and is to give it to me, to be enrolled among the elect.

These letters refer to a very interesting picture of the *Cotter's Saturday Night*, which had been executed by the first Scottish artist of his day for such subjects—the ingenious David Allan. Mr Thomson, it is to be observed, had from the beginning thought Burns entitled to pecuniary remuneration for his songs, and, though not rich himself, and his work was far from being a promising adventure, he had pressed one small pecuniary gift upon the poet. Burns, on the other hand, as we have seen, was decidedly repugnant to such gifts, and threatened, in the event of a second, to discontinue his assistance. In these circumstances, Mr Thomson's sense of obligation sought relief in small presents to the poet. On one occasion, he ventured on a shawl for Mrs Burns, of a kind then novel and fashionable. He now sends an original picture by an artist of reputation, and with a subject the selection of which must have been felt as a compliment by the bard. He had also been, as we have seen, liberal in the bestowal of copies of his first half volume, which was all that was published in Burns's lifetime.

In the letter of Burns to Mr Thomson, in which the poet describes the arrival of the picture, there is a passage which Dr Currie omitted: ‘As to what you hint of my coming to Edinburgh, I know of no such arrangement.’ One cannot well resist the inclination to believe, that this relates to a plan of the benevolent Laird of Fintry for the benefit of Burns. Professor Walker speaks of such a scheme as belonging to an earlier period of the poet’s official career. ‘Mr Graham,’ he says, ‘taking advantage of the reasonable measure of official reputation which Burns possessed, had, with no less judgment than kindness, projected a plan for his benefit. Could this plan have been executed, it would in all probability have been equally effectual in providing him with the means of comfortable subsistence, with a stimulus to mental exertion, and with those moral restraints which his character appears to have required. The plan was to appoint him to a respectable office at Leith, with an easy duty, and with emoluments rising nearly to £.200 per annum. There he would naturally have formed a stricter intimacy with his literary patrons in Edinburgh. His ambition to renew their applause, would have urged him to employ his leisure in poetical compositions; and his desire to retain their favourable notice, would have been the most efficient correction of those irregular habits, and that neglect of character, into which he was betrayed by his passions. .... But all these friendly designs of his patron were frustrated by the imprudence of the poet.’ It seems not unlikely that, now the blast of 1792 was fairly overblown, and Burns’s official qualifications had stood the test of three more years, Mr Graham had renewed his well-meant plan, and entertained some hopes of carrying it into effect.

BURNS TO MR THOMSON.<sup>1</sup>

ENGLISH SONG.

FORLORN, MY LOVE, NO COMFORT NEAR.

TUNE—*Let me in this ae Night.*

Forlorn, my love, no comfort near,  
 Far, far from thee, I wander here;  
 Far, far from thee, the fate severe  
     At which I most repine, love.

## CHORUS.

Oh, wert thou, love, but near me ;  
 But near, near, near me :  
 How kindly thou wouldest cheer me,  
     And mingle sighs with mine, love.

Around me scowls a wintry sky,  
 That blasts each bud of hope and joy ;  
 And shelter, shade, nor home have I,  
     Save in those arms of thine, love.

Cold, altered friendship’s cruel part,  
 To poison fortune’s ruthless dart—  
 Let me not break thy faithful heart,  
     And say that fate is mine, love.

But dreary though the moments fleet,  
 Oh, let me think we yet shall meet !  
 That only ray of solace sweet  
     Can on thy Chloris shine, love.

How do you like the foregoing? I have written it within this hour: so much for the speed of my Pegasus; but what say you to his bottom?

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## URNS TO MR THOMSON

[Post-mark, July 3,] 1795.

SCOTTISH BALLAD.

## LAST MAY A BRAW WOOER.

TUNE—*The Lothian Lassie.*

Last May a braw wooer cam down the lang glen,  
 And sair wi’ his love he did deave me ;  
 I said there was naething I hated like men—  
 The deuce gae wi’m to believe me, believe me ;  
 The deuce gac wi’m to believe me.

<sup>1</sup> This letter has no date or post-mark. In Currie’s series, it is placed erroneously after that which here follows it.

He spak o' the darts o' my bonnie black een,  
 And vowed for my love he was dying ;  
 I said he might die when he liked for Jean—  
 The Lord forgie me for lying, for lying ;  
 The Lord forgie me for lying !

A well-stocked mailen—himsel for the laird—  
 And marriage aff-hand, were his proffers :  
 I never loot on that I kenned it, or cared,  
 But thought I might hae waur offers, waur offers ;  
 But thought I might hae waur offers.

But what wad ye think ?—in a fortnight or less,  
 The deil tak his taste to gae near her !

He up the Gateslack to my black cousin Bess,  
 Guess ye how, the jad ! I could bear her, could bear her ;  
 Guess ye how, the jad ! I could bear her.

But a' the niest week as I fretted wi' care,  
 I gaed to the tryste o' Dalgarnock,  
 And wha but my fine fickle lover was there !  
 I glowered as I'd seen a warlock, a warlock ;  
 I glowered as I'd seen a warlock.

But owre my left shouther I gae him a blink,  
 Lest neibors might say I was saucy ;  
 My wooer he capered as he'd been in drink,  
 And vowed I was his dear lassie, dear lassie ;  
 And vowed I was his dear lassie.

I speered for my cousin fu' couthy and sweet,  
 Gin she had recovered her hearin',  
 And how my auld shoon fitted her shachl't feet,<sup>1</sup>      distorted  
 But, Heavens ! how he fell a swearin', a swearin' ;  
 But, Heavens ! how he fell a swearin'.

He begged, for guidsake, I wad be his wife,  
 Or else I wad kill him wi' sorrow :  
 So e'en to preserve the poor body in life,  
 I think I maun wed him to-morrow, to-morrow ;  
 I think I maun wed him to-morrow.

#### FRAGMENT.

TUNE—*The Caledonian Hunt's Delight.*

Why, why tell thy lover,  
 Bliss he never must enjoy ?  
 Why, why undeceive him,  
 And give all his hopes the lie ?

<sup>1</sup> When a lover passes over from one mistress to another, the latter is said to take up the old shoes of her predecessor.

O why, while fancy, raptured, slumbers,  
 Chloris, Chloris all the theme,  
 Why, why wouldest thou cruel,  
 Wake thy lover from his dream ?

Such is the peculiarity of the rhythm of this air, that I find it impossible to make another stanza to suit it.

I am at present quite occupied with the charming sensations of the toothache, so have not a word to spare.

---

## MR THOMSON TO BURNS.

3d June 1795.

MY DEAR SIR—Your English verses to *Let me in this ae Night*, are tender and beautiful; and your ballad to the *Lothian Lassie* is a master-piece for its humour and *naivete*. The fragment for the *Caledonian Hunt* is quite suited to the original measure of the air, and, as it plagues you so, the fragment must content it. I would rather, as I said before, have had bacchanalian words, had it so pleased the poet; but, nevertheless, for what we have received, Lord, make us thankful !

[In this letter, Mr Thomson objected to the introduction of the word Gateslack, and also that of Dalgarnock, in the song of the *Braw Wooer*.]

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## BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

[Post-mark, August 3,] 1795.

IN *Whistle, and I'll come to ye, my Lad*, the iteration of that line is tiresome to my ear. Here goes what I think is an improvement—

O whistle, and I'll come to ye, my lad;  
 O whistle, and I'll come to ye, my lad;  
 Though father and mother and a' should gae mad,  
 Thy Jeanie will venture wi' ye, my lad.

In fact, a fair dame, at whose shrine I, the Priest of the Nine, offer up the incense of Parnassus—a dame whom the Graces have attired in witchcraft, and whom the Loves have armed with lightning—a fair one, herself the heroine of the song, insists on the amendment, and dispute her commands if you dare !

Gateslack, the word you object to, is the name of a particular place, a kind of passage up among the Lowther Hills, on the confines of this county. Dalgarnock is also the name of a romantic spot near the Nith, where are still a ruined church and a burial-ground. However, let the first run, ‘He up the lang loan,’ &c.

## O THIS IS NO MY AIN LASSIE.

TUNE—*This is no my ain House.*

## CHORUS.

O this is no my ain lassie,  
 Fair though the lassie be;  
 O weel ken I my ain lassie,  
 Kind love is in her ee.<sup>1</sup>

I see a form, I see a face,  
 Ye weel may wi' the fairest place :  
 It wants, to me, the witching grace,  
 The kind love that's in her ee.

She's bonnie, blooming, straight, and tall,  
 And lang has had my heart in thrall ;  
 And aye it charms my very saul,  
 The kind love that's in her ee.

A thief sae pawkie is my Jean,                      sly  
 To steal a blink, by a' unseen ;  
 But gleg as light are lovers' een,                      quick  
 When kind love is in the ee.

It may escape the courtly sparks,  
 It may escape the learnèd clerks ;  
 But weel the watching lover marks  
 The kind love that's in her ee.

Do you know that you have roused the torpidity of Clarke at last ? He has requested me to write three or four songs for him, which he is to set to music himself. The enclosed sheet contains two songs for him, which please to present to my valued friend Cunningham.

I enclose the sheet open, both for your inspection, and that you may copy the song, *O Bonnie was yon rosy Brier*. I do not know whether I am right, but that song pleases me ; and as it is extremely probable that Clarke's newly-roused celestial spark will be soon smothered in the fogs of indolence, if you like the song, it may go as Scottish verses to the air of *I wish my Love was in a Mire*; and poor Erskine's English lines may follow.

I enclose you a *For a' that, and a' that*, which was never in print : it is a much superior song to mine. I have been told that it was composed by a lady.

<sup>1</sup> The reader will learn with surprise, that the poet originally wrote this chorus—

O this is no my ain Body,  
 Kind though the Body be, &c.

## TO MR CUNNINGHAM.

SCOTTISH SONG.

Now spring has clad the grove in green,  
 And strewed the lea wi' flowers :  
 The furrowed, waving corn is seen  
 Rejoice in fostering showers ; . . .  
 While ilk a thing in nature join  
 Their sorrows to forego,  
 O why thus all alone are mine  
 The weary steps of wo !

The trout within yon wimpling burn  
 Glides swift—a silver dart ;  
 And safe beneath the shady thorn  
 Defies the angler's art.  
 My life was ance that careless stream,  
 That wanton trout was I ;  
 But love, wi' unrelenting beam,  
 Has scorched my fountains dry.

The little floweret's peaceful lot,  
 In yonder cliff that grows,  
 Which, save the linnet's flight, I wot,  
 Nae ruder visit knows,  
 Was mine ; till love has o'er me past,  
 And blighted a' my bloom,  
 And now beneath the withering blast  
 My youth and joy consume.

The wakened laverock warbling springs,  
 And climbs the early sky,  
 Winnowing blithe her dewy wings  
 In morning's rosy eye.  
 As little recked I sorrow's power,  
 Until the flowery snare  
 O' witching love, in luckless hour,  
 Made me the thrall o' care.

O had my fate been Greenland snows,  
 Or Afric's burning zone,  
 Wi' man and nature leagued my foes.  
 So Peggy ne'er I'd known !  
 The wretch whase doom is, 'hope nae mair,  
 What tongue his woes can tell !  
 Within whase bosom, save despair,  
 Nae kinder spirits dwell.

## O BONNIE WAS YON ROSY BRIER.

O bonnie was yon rosy brier,  
 That blooms sae far frae haunt o' man;  
 And bonnie she, and ah! how dear!  
 It shaded frae the e'enin' sun.

Yon rosebuds in the morning dew,  
 How pure amang the leaves sae green;  
 But purer was the lover's vow  
 They witnessed in their shade yestreen.

All in its rude and prickly bower,  
 That crimson rose, how sweet and fair;  
 But love is far a sweeter flower  
 Amid life's thorny path o' care.

The pathless wild and wimpling burn,  
 Wi' Chloris in my arms, be mine;  
 And I the world, nor wish, nor scorn,  
 Its joys and griefs alike resign.

Written on the blank leaf of a copy of the last edition of my poems, presented to the lady whom, in so many fictitious reveries of passion, but with the most ardent sentiments of real friendship, I have so often sung under the name of Chloris:—

‘To Chloris.’ [See *antea*, p. 104.]

*Une bagatelle de l'amitié.*

COILA.

## MR THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 3d August 1795.

MY DEAR SIR—This will be delivered to you by a Dr Brianton, who has read your works, and pants for the honour of your acquaintance. I do not know the gentleman; but his friend, who applied to me for this introduction, being an excellent young man, I have no doubt he is worthy of all acceptance.

My eyes have just been gladdened, and my mind feasted, with your last packet—full of pleasant things indeed. What an imagination is yours!—it is superfluous to tell you, that I am delighted with all the three songs, as well as with your elegant and tender verses to Chloris.

I am sorry you should be induced to alter ‘O whistle, and I'll come to ye, my lad,’ to the prosaic line, ‘Thy Jeanie will venture wi' ye, my lad.’ I must be permitted to say, that I do not think the latter either reads or sings so well as the former. I wish, therefore, you would in my name petition the charming Jeanie, whoever she be, to let the line remain unaltered.

I should be happy to see Mr Clarke produce a few airs to be joined to your verses. Everybody regrets his writing so very little, as everybody acknowledges his ability to write well. Pray, was the resolution formed coolly before dinner, or was it a midnight vow, made over a bowl of punch with the bard?

I shall not fail to give Mr Cunningham what you have sent him.

P.S.—The lady's *For a' that, and a' that*, is sensible enough, but no more to be compared to yours, than I to Hercules.

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To the summer of this year, Dr Currie assigns an

#### INSCRIPTION

FOR AN ALTAR TO INDEPENDENCE, AT KERROUGHTREE, THE SEAT OF MR HERON.

Thou of an independent mind,  
With soul resolved, with soul resigned ;  
Prepared Power's proudest frown to brave,  
Who wilt not be, nor have a slave ;  
Virtue alone who dost revere,  
Thy own reproach alone dost fear,  
Approach this shrine, and worship here.

Allusion has several times been made to the Duke of Queensberry, as a personage held in hatred by the poet. His Grace's character requires little illustration here. As Earl of March, his career on the turf had gained him notoriety. Succeeding in 1773 to the highest title of his family, he had not with years and honours acquired any additional share of public respect. To this heartless grandee, who resided almost constantly in London, was committed the chief territorial influence in Dumfriesshire, with all its political consequence. Country gentlemen bowed to the yoke ; but the exciseman of Dumfries—delighted at all times to

' Bare the mean heart that lurks beneath a star'—

omitted no opportunity of doing justice upon the sybarite. The two following stanzas were probably a part of the election ballad of 1790, but omitted from the copy sent by the author to M<sup>r</sup> Graham :—

How shall I sing Drumlanrig's Grace—  
Discarded remnant of a race  
Once great in martial story ?  
His forbears' virtues all contrasted—  
The very name of Douglas blasted—  
His that inverted glory.

ancestors

Hate, envy, oft the Douglas bore;  
 But he has superadded more,  
     And sunk them in contempt :  
 Follies and crimes have stained the name,  
 But, Queensberry, thine the virgin claim,  
     From aught that's good exempt.

In 1795, the duke stripped his domains of Drumlanrig, in Dumfriesshire, and Neidpath, in Peeblesshire, of all the wood fit for being cut, in order to furnish a dowry for the Countess of Yarmouth, whom he supposed to be his daughter, and to whom, by a singular piece of good-fortune on her part, Mr George Selwyn, the celebrated wit, also left a fortune, under the same (probably equally mistaken) impression. It fell to the lot of Wordsworth to avenge on the 'degenerate Douglas' his leaving old Neidpath so 'beggared and outraged.' The vindication of nature in the case of Drumlanrig became a pleasing duty to Burns. In one of his rides, he inscribed the following verses on the back of a window-shutter in an inn or toll-house near the scene of the devastations :—

[VERSES ON THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WOODS NEAR DRUMLANRIG.]

As on the banks o' wandering Nith,  
     Ae smiling simmer-morn I strayed,  
 And traced its bonnie howes and haughs,  
     Where linties sang and lambkins played,  
 I sat me down upon a craig,  
     And drank my fill o' fancy's dream,  
 When, from the eddying deep below,  
     Uprose the genius of the stream.

Dark, like the frowning rock, his brow,  
     And troubled, like his wintry wave,  
 And deep, as sighs the boding wind  
     Amang his eaves, the sigh he gave—  
 'And came ye here, my son,' he cried,  
     'To wander in my birken shade?  
 To muse some favourite Scottish theme,  
     Or sing some favourite Scottish maid.

'There was a time, it's nae lang syne,  
     Ye might hae seen me in my pride,  
 When a' my banks sae bravely saw  
     Their woody pictures in my tide;  
 When hanging beech and spreading elm  
     Shaded my stream sae clear and cool;  
 And stately oaks their twisted arms  
     Threw broad and dark across the pool ;

‘When glinting, through the trees, appeared  
 The wee white cot aboon the mill,  
 And peacefu’ rose its ingle reek,  
 That slowly curled up the hill.  
 But now the cot is bare and cauld,  
 Its branchy shelter’s lost and gane,  
 And scarce a stinted birk is left  
 To shiver in the blast its lane?’

‘Alas !’ said I, ‘what ruefu’ chance  
 Has twined ye o’ your stately trees ?  
 Has laid your rocky bosom bare ?  
 Has stripped the cleeding o’ your braes ?  
 Was it the bitter eastern blast,  
 That scatters blight in early spring ?  
 Or was’t the wil’fire scorched their boughs,  
 Or canker-worm wi’ secret sting ?’

‘Nae eastlin blast,’ the sprite replied ;  
 ‘It blew na here sae fierce and fell,  
 And on my dry and halesome banks  
 Nae canker-worms get leave to dwell :  
 Man ! cruel man !’ the genius sighed—  
 As through the cliffs he sank him down—  
 ‘The worm that gnawed my bonnie trees,  
 That reptile wears a ducal crown.’

Burns had a pleasant rencontre this autumn with an old acquaintance, Mr Pattison of Kelvin Grove, brother of a gentleman who had been serviceable with regard to the first Edinburgh edition of the poems. Mr Pattison passed through Dumfries in the course of a visit to his brother, a clergyman, residing in that county; he was accompanied by his son, who was then a boy, and a groom, all three travelling on horseback. The son, Mr John Pattison, now residing at Carnbroe, Lanarkshire, has a perfect recollection of the circumstances. On riding up to the inn, a gentleman was seen standing on the stairs, whom Mr Pattison at once hailed as Burns. To quote from his son’s recital :—‘He who had remained motionless till now, rushed down the steps, and caught my father by the hand, saying : “Mr Pattison, I am delighted to see you here ; how do you do ?” I need not say this was our immortal bard. My father continued : “Burns, I hope you will dine with me at four o’clock ?” “Too happy, sir,” replied the poet. “Then, may I beg of you to go with my compliments to your friend, Dr Maxwell, and say, I will be glad if he will do us the pleasure of joining us ?” At the hour named, my father sat down at the head of the table, Dr Maxwell at the foot, and the grammar-school boy

opposite Burns. Upwards of half a century has passed away; but the recollection of that day is as fresh and green in my memory, as if the events recorded had occurred yesterday. It was, in fact, a new era in my existence. I had never before sat after dinner; but now I was chained to my chair till late at night, or rather early in the morning. Both Dr Maxwell and my father were highly-gifted, eloquent men. The poet was in his best vein. I can never forget the animation and glorious intelligence of his countenance, the rich, deep tones of his musical voice, and those matchless eyes, which absolutely appeared to flash fire, and stream forth rays of living light. It was not conversation I heard; it was an outburst of noble sentiment, brilliant wit, and a flood of sympathy and good-will to fellow-men. Burns repeated many verses that had never seen the light, chiefly political; no impure or obscene idea was uttered, or I believe thought of: it was altogether an intellectual feast. A lofty, pure, and transcendant genius alone could have made so deep and lasting an impression on a mere boy, who had read nothing, and who does not remember to have heard Burns named till that day.<sup>1</sup>

We have already had some glimpses of the personal habits of Burns in Dumfries. It was a life of official duty, certified to have been well performed, and not without respectable literary effort, as the many songs composed for Thomson and Johnson fully testify. It was also a life maintaining a certain external decorum, and to some kind-hearted people, who did not look narrowly or judge rigidly, it appeared as a life really respectable. There was, for example, a young teacher at the grammar-school, himself a poet and an enthusiast in literature—a pure-minded man, who took amiable views of most people he met, and of all who blacked paper in particular. James Gray, seeing Burns only as the careful tender of his children's education, hearing him speak only in the hours of soberness, never regarded him as otherwise than his best friends would have wished to regard him. Even Mrs Burns, who ought to have known her husband well, appeared to have no fault to find with him. She was eager to aver that she had never known him return home in such a state as to prevent his seeing that the house was properly locked up, or to require any assistance in taking off his clothes. Mr Findlater, the supervisor, though not more than a little free in his own habits, as gentlemen then used to be, spoke favourably of those of Burns. It was, nevertheless, a life involving far more dissipation than was generally considered as allowable even in those days of laxity. There

<sup>1</sup> The extract is given, with some authorised alterations of phrase, from a letter published anonymously by Mr John Pattison in the *Glasgow Citizen*, January 1848.

was only a variance of remark or report upon the subject, according as individuals were qualified or inclined to judge. In certain circles, a candid stranger might have heard of the over-frequent indulgences of our poet in gay company—of his being dangerously attractive to young men—of his occasionally descending into society utterly unworthy of him, and which no man can approach without contamination. It would have been found that some young women, who enjoyed the acquaintance of the amiable wife of the poet, were only able to visit her in a manner by stealth, their fathers deeming it unadvisable that they should see much of Burns. It was little, after this, that some should inveigh against his arrogance in conversation, or point out that a worthy member of society, who disliked his habits or opinions, was as sure of his satire as if he had been, from any cause, really obnoxious to public odium. Again, while Burns was spoken of coldly in some families of the middle class, cultivators of the sober respectabilities proper to their grade, he might have been found a favourite in higher circles, which he visited only under such an awe as to keep his wilder nature in check. It is a most perplexing subject among his various biographers, but only because of the very various and incoherent conduct of the bard himself—the quiet '*Mr Burns*' in some eyes, the wild bacchanal at times in others—the generous sentimentalist at some moments, and not long after, the very high-priest of the sensual and the ridiculous. We have seen this variableness of character even in what appear the most painful crises of his life. He wrote a lively epistle in Scotch verse the day after *To Mary in Heaven* was wrung from his anguished heart; and ere many days had elapsed from the humiliating censure of the Excise-board, he carried on a merry dinner-party till eleven o'clock next day. Men now sympathise with the unworthiness of his fate, and certainly it was far below his deserts; but it is highly questionable if Burns took, except transiently, the same views of it himself. No—

‘ A towmond o’ trouble, should that be my fa’,  
 A night o’ guid-fellowship sowthers it a’;  
 When at the blithe end of our journey at last,  
 Wha the deil ever thinks o’ the road he has past?’

This is Burns’s own view of his life, and it is in some measure true to his ordinary feelings and practice.<sup>1</sup>

In the autumn of 1795, Burns suffered much in mind from the protracted illness of his infant daughter, who at length died at such a distance as to prevent him from paying her the last duties.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, No. 13.

<sup>2</sup> This infant died and was buried at Mauchline.

According to Dr Currie, the poet's health had for upwards of a year before his death—that is, from early summer of 1795—begun to give way. This would appear to be quite true, for a gentleman informs me that, calling for Burns in spring 1795, he found him ailing. He rubbed his shoulders slightly, and said: 'I am beginning to feel as if I were soon to be an old man.' But, indeed, we have his own testimony in a letter to Mrs Dunlop, of 25th June 1794, that he was even then threatened with a punishment for the follies of his youth, in the form of a flying gout, though he hoped that his medical friends were mistaken in their surmises. The fact is, that Burns had lived too fast to be what most men are at seven-and-thirty. According to Dr Currie, who had access to the best information on the subject, the poet was confined with 'an accidental complaint,' from October 1795 till the January following. The fact of the ailment and its date may be admitted; but it would appear that the confinement was at least not constant, or such as to interfere with the performance of duty. Professor Walker passed two days with him in November, and observed no unfavourable change in his looks, his spirits, or his appetite.

'Circumstances,' says the professor, 'having at that time led me to Scotland, after an absence of eight years, during which my intercourse with Burns had been almost suspended, I felt myself strongly prompted to visit him. For this purpose, I went to Dumfries, and called upon him early in the forenoon. I found him in a small house of one storey.<sup>1</sup> He was sitting on a window-seat reading, with the doors open, and the family arrangements going on in his presence, and altogether without that appearance of snugness which a student requires. After conversing with him for some time, he proposed a walk, and promised to conduct me through some of his favourite haunts. We accordingly quitted the town, and wandered a considerable way up the beautiful banks of the Nith. Here he gave me an account of his latest productions, and repeated some satirical ballads which he had composed, to favour one of the candidates at the last borough election.<sup>2</sup> . . . He repeated also his fragment of an *Ode to Liberty*, with marked and peculiar energy, and shewed a disposition, which, however, was easily repressed, to throw out peculiar remarks, of the same nature with those for which he had been reprehended. On finishing our walk, he passed some time with me at the inn, and I left him early in the evening, to make another visit at some distance from Dumfries.'

<sup>1</sup> The house is one of two floors.

<sup>2</sup> The ballads on the Kirkcudbright election; *vids supra*.

'On the second morning after,' continues the professor, 'I returned with a friend, who was acquainted with the poet, and we found him ready to pass a part of the day with us at the inn. On this occasion, I did not think him quite so interesting as he had appeared at his outset. His conversation was too elaborate, and his expression weakened by a frequent endeavour to give it artificial strength. He had been accustomed to speak for applause in the circles which he frequented, and seemed to think it necessary, in making the most common remark, to depart a little from the ordinary simplicity of language, and to couch it in something of epigrammatic point. In his praise and censure, he was so decisive as to render a dissent from his judgment difficult to be reconciled with the laws of good-breeding. His wit was not more licentious than is unhappily too venial in higher circles, though I thought him rather unnecessarily free in the avowal of his excesses. Such were the clouds by which the pleasures of the evening were partially obscured, but frequent coruscations of genius were visible between them. When it began to grow late, he shewed no disposition to retire, but called for fresh supplies of liquor, with a freedom which might be excusable, as we were in an inn, and no condition had been distinctly made, though it might easily have been inferred, had the inference been welcome, that he was to consider himself as our guest; nor was it till he saw us worn out that he departed, about three in the morning. . . . Upon the whole, I found this last interview not quite so gratifying as I had expected; although I had discovered in his conduct no errors which I had not seen in men who stand high in the favour of society, or sufficient to account for the mysterious insinuations which I had heard against his character. He on this occasion drank freely without being intoxicated, a circumstance from which I concluded, not only that his constitution was still unbroken, but that he was not addicted to solitary cordials; for if he had tasted liquor in the morning, he must have easily yielded to the excess of the evening.'

It is proper to state the remark which a friend of Professor Walker has made to us respecting these anecdotes of Burns—namely, that the learned gentleman was unconscious of the fastidiousness which eight years of refined life in England had created in his own mind, and thus unintentionally judged of Burns's manners more severely than was strictly just. The *de haut en bas* style in which the professor treats Burns is also obvious to remark. The poet, in his own time, was too apt to be regarded in this manner by well-wishers, as well as enemies or the merely indifferent. And one cannot resist the feeling that, if Burns had not been looked upon in his life and for some years

after his death as only a poor man who had attracted some attention by clever verses, more tenderness would have been shewn towards frailties which we every day see overlooked in men that have attained or been born to an elevated place in the merely social scale.

At this time the young actress, Miss Fontenelle, for whom the poet had written an address three years before, was again performing in the Dumfries theatre, and he was once more persuaded to pen some lines for her service. They are introduced by himself in a letter of dolorous tone to Mrs Dunlop.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

*15th December 1795.*

MY DEAR FRIEND—As I am in a complete Decemberish humour, gloomy, sullen, stupid, as even the Deity of Dulness herself could wish, I shall not drawl out a heavy letter with a number of heavier apologies for my late silence. Only one I shall mention, because I know you will sympathise in it: these four months, a sweet little girl, my youngest child, has been so ill, that every day, a week or less threatened to terminate her existence. There had much need be many pleasures annexed to the states of husband and father, for, God knows, they have many peculiar cares. I cannot describe to you the anxious, sleepless hours these ties frequently give me. I see a train of helpless little folks; me and my exertions all their stay; and on what a brittle thread does the life of man hang! If I am nipt off at the command of fate, even in all the vigour of manhood, as I am—such things happen every day—Gracious God! what would become of my little flock? 'Tis here that I envy your people of fortune. A father on his death-bed, taking an everlasting leave of his children, has indeed wo enough; but the man of competent fortune leaves his sons and daughters independency and friends; while I— But I shall run distracted if I think any longer on the subject!

To leave talking of the matter so gravely, I shall sing with the old Scots ballad—

O that I had ne'er been married,  
I would never had nae care;  
Now I've gotten wife and bairns,  
They cry crowdie evermair.

Crowdie ance, crowdie twice,  
Crowdie three times in a day;  
An ye crowdie ony mair,  
Ye'll crowdie a' my meal away.

*24th December.*

We have had a brilliant theatre here this season; only, as all other business does, it experiences a stagnation of trade from the epidemical

complaint of the country—*want of cash*. I mentioned our theatre merely to lug in an occasional Address, which I wrote for the benefit-night of one of the actresses, and which is as follows :—

## ADDRESS,

SPOKEN BY MISS FONTENELLE ON HER BENEFIT-NIGHT.<sup>1</sup>

Still anxious to secure your partial favour,  
 And not less anxious, sure, this night, than ever,  
 A Prologue, Epilogue, or some such matter,  
 'Twould vamp my bill, said I, if nothing better ;  
 So sought a Poet, roosted near the skies,  
 Told him I came to feast my curious eyes ;  
 Said, nothing like his works was ever printed ;  
 And last, my Prologue-business slily hinted.  
 ' Ma'am, let me tell you,' quoth my man of rhymes,  
 ' I know your bent—these are no laughing times :  
 Can you—but, Miss, I own I have my fears—  
 Dissolve in pause and sentimental tears,  
 With laden sighs, and solemn-rounded sentence ;  
 Rouse from his sluggish slumbers fell Repentance ;  
 Paint Vengeance as he takes his horrid stand,  
 Waving on high the desolating brand,  
 Calling the storms to bear him o'er a guilty land ?'

I could no more—askance the creature eyeing,  
 D'ye think, said I, this face was made for crying ?  
 I'll laugh, that's poz—nay, more, the world shall know it ;  
 And so, your servant ! gloomy Master Poet !  
 Firm as my creed, Sirs, 'tis my fixed belief,  
 That Misery's another word for Grief ;  
 I also think—so may I be a bride !  
 That so much laughter, so much life enjoyed.

Thou man of crazy care and ceaseless sigh,  
 Still under bleak Misfortune's blasting eye ;  
 Doomed to that sorest task of man alive—  
 To make three guineas do the work of five :  
 Laugh in Misfortune's face—the beldam witch !  
 Say, you'll be merry, though you can't be rich.  
 Thou other man of care, the wretch in love,  
 Who long with jiltish arts and airs hast strove ;  
 Who, as the boughs all temptingly project,  
 Measur'st in desperate thought—a rope—thy neck—  
 Or, where the beetling cliff o'erhangs the deep,  
 Peerest to meditate the healing leap :

<sup>1</sup> December 4, 1795.

Wouldst thou be cured, thou silly, moping elf!  
 Laugh at her follies—laugh e'en at thyself:  
 Learn to despise those frowns now so terrific,  
 And love a kinder—that's your grand specific.

To sum up all, be merry, I advise;  
 And as we're merry, may we still be wise.

25th, *Christmas morning.*

This, my much-loved friend, is a morning of wishes; accept mine—so Heaven hear me as they are sincere!—that blessings may attend your steps, and affliction know you not! In the charming words of my favourite author, *The Man of Feeling*: ‘May the Great Spirit bear up the weight of thy gray hairs, and blunt the arrow that brings them rest!’

Now that I talk of authors, how do you like Cowper? Is not the *Task* a glorious poem! The religion of the *Task*, bating a few scraps of Calvinistic divinity, is the religion of God and Nature—the religion that exalts, that ennobles man. Were not you to send me your *Zeluco*, in return for mine? Tell me how you like my marks and notes through the book. I would not give a farthing for a book unless I were at liberty to blot it with my criticisms.

I have lately collected, for a friend's perusal, all my letters; I mean those which I first sketched, in a rough draught, and afterwards wrote out fair. On looking over some old musty papers, which from time to time I had parcelled by, as trash that were scarce worth preserving, and which yet, at the same time, I did not care to destroy, I discovered many of these rude sketches, and have written, and am writing them out, in a bound MS. for my friend's library. As I wrote always to you the rhapsody of the moment, I cannot find a single scroll to you, except one, about the commencement of our acquaintance. If there were any possible conveyance, I would send you a perusal of my book.

R. B.

It was probably at the end of the year that the poet addressed a short unceremonious rhymed epistle to worthy Collector Mitchell, alluding to a want of ready money, which he desired his friend to remedy by the temporary advance of a guinea, and also speaking of his illness as leaving him with resolutions of more careful conduct in future.

#### TO COLLECTOR MITCHELL.

Friend of the Poet, tried and leal,  
 Wha, wanting thee, might beg or steal;  
 Alake, alake, the meikle deil  
     Wi' a' his witches  
 Are at it, skelpin' jig and reel,  
     In my poor pouches!

I modestly fu' fain wad hint it,  
 That one-pound-one, I sairly want it ;  
 If wi' the hizzie down ye sent it,  
     It would be kind ;  
 And while my heart wi' life-blood dunted,  
     servant-girl  
     I'd bear't in mind.  
 And while my heart wi' life-blood dunted,  
     throbbed  
 So may the auld year gang out moaning  
 To see the new come laden, groaning,  
 Wi' double plenty o'er the loanin  
     To thee and thine :  
 Domestic peace and comforts crowning  
     The hale design.

## POSTSCRIPT.

Ye've heard this while how I've been licket,  
 And by fell death was nearly nicket ;  
 Grim loon ! he got me by the fecket,  
     waistcoat  
     And sair me sheuk ;  
 But by guid luck I lap a wicket,  
     And turned a neuk.  
 But by that health, I've got a share o't,  
 And by that life, I'm promised mair o't,  
 My hale and weel I'll tak a care o't,  
     A tentier way ;  
 Then farewell folly, hide and hair o't,  
     For ance and aye !

The present was a season of national distress, in consequence of a failure of the late harvest. Discontents, meetings, and mobbings alarmed the ministry, and towards the close of the year, it was conceived that some additional restrictions upon the expression of public sentiment were necessary; hence the celebrated sedition-bill of that period. The broken remains of the Whig party were greatly exasperated by the measure, and amongst the various expressions of adverse sentiment in Scotland, none attracted more attention than a public meeting which took place at the Circus—now Adelphi Theatre—in Edinburgh, where the Honourable Henry Erskine, Dean of the Faculty of Advocates, presided. The Tory majority of the Scottish bar, seeing their chief thus engaged, as they said, in ‘agitating the giddy and ignorant multitude, and cherishing such humours and dispositions as directly tend to overturn the laws,’ resolved, at the approaching annual election to the deanship, to oppose Mr Erskine’s reappointment. It was a most painful step for them to take, Erskine being a favourite with all parties and classes of men; but they felt that private feelings must yield to the sense of public duty. Throughout the whole of December, a war raged upon the subject in the

newspapers, and the 'Parliament House' had never known a more agitating crisis. At length, on the 12th of January 1796, the election took place, when Mr Dundas, the Lord Advocate, was preferred to honest Harry by a majority of 123 against 38 votes. The degraded dean was himself deeply mortified by the event. In the vexation of the moment, he went that night to his door, and hewed off from it with a coal-axe the brass-plate which expressed his forfeited dignity.<sup>1</sup> The liberals throughout the country read the news with a bitterness beyond all common measure. It seemed to them as if every virtue under heaven was now to be as nothing, wanting the accompaniment of what they called subservient political professions. It was not likely that Burns would hear of the degradation of his friend and ancient patron with tranquil feelings, or remain quite silent on the occasion. He privately circulated the following effusion referring to the contest:—

THE DEAN OF FACULTY,

A BALLAD.

Dire was the hate at old Harlaw,  
 That Scot to Scot did carry;  
 And dire the discord Langside saw,  
 For beauteous hapless Mary:  
 But Scot with Scot ne'er met so hot,  
 Or were more in fury seen, Sir,  
 Than 'twixt Hal and Bob for the famous job—  
 Who should be Faculty's Dean, Sir.

This Hal for genius, wit, and lore,  
 Among the first was numbered;  
 But pious Bob, 'mid learning's store,  
 Commandment tenth remembered.  
 Yet simple Bob the victory got,  
 And won his heart's desire;  
 Which shews that Heaven can boil the pot,  
 Though the devil — in the fire.

Squire Hal besides had in this case  
 Pretensions rather brassy,  
 For talents to deserve a place  
 Are qualifications saucy;  
 So their worships of the Faculty,  
 Quite sick of merit's rudeness,  
 Chose one who should owe it all, d'ye see,  
 To their gratis grace and goodness.

<sup>1</sup> This fact is stated on the authority of the late Mr James Bertram, brewer Edinburgh, who was Mr Erskine's clerk at the time.

As once on Pisgah purged was the sight  
 Of a son of Circumcision,  
 So may be, on this Pisgah height,  
 Bob's purblind, mental vision :  
 Nay, Bobby's mouth may be opened yet,  
 Till for eloquence you hail him,  
 And swear he has the Angel met  
 That met the Ass of Balaam.

In your heretic sins may you live and die,  
 Ye heretic Eight-and-Thirty,  
 But accept, ye sublime majority,  
 My congratulations hearty.  
 With your Honours and a certain King  
 In your servants this is striking,  
 The more incapacity they bring,  
 The more they're to your liking.

It is not impossible—our bard being not quite an angel—that he might recall to mind on this occasion that 'Bob' had taken no sort of notice of a certain elegy which had been written in 1787 on the death of his father the Lord President.

It is perhaps just worthy of being remarked in addition, that this was one occasion when the two greatest of Scotland's modern great men might be said to meet in the struggle of public life—for, while Burns stood thus by Harry Erskine, the name of Walter Scott is found in the ranks of those who opposed and voted against him. It would have been pleasant to add, that young Francis Jeffrey had made an appearance on the occasion ; but it appears that, while strongly inclined to vote with the minority, he was induced by a regard for the wishes of his father to remain neutral.<sup>1</sup>

Early in the month of January, when his health was in the course of improvement, Burns tarried to a late hour at a jovial party in the Globe Tavern. Before returning home, he unluckily remained for some time in the open air, and, overpowered by the effects of the liquor he had drunk, fell asleep. In these circumstances, and in the peculiar condition to which a severe medicine had reduced his constitution, a fatal chill penetrated to his bones ; he reached home with the seeds of a rheumatic fever already in possession of his weakened frame. In this little accident, and not in the pressure of poverty or disrepute, or wounded feelings or a broken heart, truly lay the determining cause of the sadly shortened days of our great national poet. Dr Currie states, that

<sup>1</sup> Cockburn's *Life of Lord Jeffrey*.

the new illness confined him for about a week; and this was probably true, although some expressions of the bard himself would indicate a longer period of extreme illness.

## TO MRS RIDDEL.

DUMFRIES, 20th January 1796.

I CANNOT express my gratitude to you for allowing me a longer perusal of *Anacharsis*. In fact, I never met with a book that bewitched me so much; and I, as a member of the library, must warmly feel the obligation you have laid us under. Indeed, to me the obligation is stronger than to any other individual of our society; as *Anacharsis* is an indispensable desideratum to a son of the Muses.

The health you wished me in your morning's card is, I think, flown from me for ever. I have not been able to leave my bed to-day till about an hour ago. These wickedly unlucky advertisements I lent (I did wrong) to a friend, and I am ill able to go in quest of him.

The Muses have not quite forsaken me. The following detached stanzas I intend to interweave in some disastrous tale of a shepherd.

R. B.

On the 28th, Burns was sufficiently well to attend the Mason Lodge, and recommend for entry as an apprentice Mr James Georgeson, a Liverpool merchant. Next day, he sent Mr Peter Hill his annual *kipper*, or dried salmon, with a brief but apparently cheerful letter, imposing on his friend the condition, 'that you do not, like a fool, as you were last year, put yourself to five times the value in expense of a return;' sending, moreover, compliments to various friends, and promising a longer letter in ten days, but in the meantime saying not a word of illness.<sup>1</sup> It would have been puzzling to find him, two days later, writing in the following doleful terms to Mrs Dunlop, if we had not already had ample opportunities of knowing how light and transient were all the feelings of Burns, three days of suffering being as liable to appear to him as a long season of wo, as a few hours of merriment were to make him forget that any misfortune lay at his door:—

## TO MRS DUNLOP.

DUMFRIES, 31st January 1796.

THESE many months you have been two packets in my debt—what sin of ignorance I have committed against so highly valued a friend, I am utterly at a loss to guess. Alas! madam, ill can I

<sup>1</sup> Volume of Burns's letters to Mr Peter Hill, in possession of —— Wilson, Esq., Dalmarnock.

afford, at this time, to be deprived of any of the small remnant of my pleasures. I have lately drunk deep of the cup of affliction. The autumn robbed me of my only daughter and darling child, and that at a distance, too, and so rapidly, as to put it out of my power to pay the last duties to her. I had scarcely begun to recover from that shock, when I became myself the victim of a most severe rheumatic fever, and long the die spun doubtful; until, after many weeks of a sick-bed, it seems to have turned up life, and I am beginning to crawl across my room, and once indeed have been before my own door in the street.

When pleasure fascinates the mental sight,  
Affliction purifies the visual ray,  
Religion hails the drear, the untried night,  
And shuts, for ever shuts ! life's doubtful day.

R. B.

About this time, he met one day in the street Mrs Haugh, who had been his neighbour when he resided in the Wee Vennel. They had some serious conversation about his health, and she afterwards remembered one remarkable expression which he used: 'I find,' said he, 'that a man may live like a fool, but he will scarcely die like one.'

His commander had sent to make some kind inquiries about his health, and he replied in rhyme :

TO COLONEL DE PEYSTER.

My honoured colonel, deep I feel  
Your interest in the poet's weal :  
Ah ! now sma' heart hae I to speel  
            The steep Parnassus,  
Surrounded thus by bolus pill,  
            And potion glasses.

Dame Life, though fiction out may trick her,  
And in paste gems and frippery deck her;  
Oh! flickering, feeble, and unsicker      *uncertain*  
I've found her still  
Aye wavering like the willow-wicker,  
'Tween good and ill.

Then that curst carmagnole, auld Satan,  
 Watches like baudrons by a rattan,  
 Our sinfu' saul to get a claut on  
     Wi' felon ire ;  
 Syne, whip ! his tail ye'll ne'er cast saut on—  
     He's aff like fire.

the cat  
clutch

Ah Nick ! ah Nick ! it is na fair,  
 First shewing us the tempting ware,  
 Bright wines and bonnie lasses rare,  
     To put us daft ;  
 Syne weave, unseen, thy spider snare  
     O' hell's damned waft.

Poor man, the flee, aft bizzes by,  
 And aft, as chance he comes thee nigh,  
 Thy auld damned elbow yeuks wi' joy,  
     And hellish pleasure ;  
 Already in thy fancy's eye,  
     Thy sicker treasure !

itches  
certain

Soon, heels-o'er-gowdie ! in he gangs,  
 And like a sheep-head on a tangs,  
 Thy girning laugh enjoys his pangs  
     And murdering wrestle,  
 As, dangling in the wind, he hangs  
     A gibbet's tassel.

heels-overhead

But lest you think I am uncivil,  
 To plague you with this draunting drivel,  
 Abjuring a' intentions evil,  
     I quat my pen :  
 The Lord preserve us frae the devil !  
     Amen ! Amen !<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Arentz Schulyer de Peyster died at Dumfries in November 1822, at the age, it was believed, of ninety-six or ninety-seven years. He had held the royal commission for about eighty years. In early life, he commanded at Detroit, Michilimackinac, and other parts of Upper Canada, during the seven years' war, when he distinguished himself by detaching the Indians from the service of the French. To pursue an obituary notice in the *Dumfries Courier*: 'The deceased also served in various other parts of North America under his uncle, Colonel Schulyer; and after being promoted to the rank of colonel, and commanding for many years the 8th Regiment, he retired to Dumfries, the native town of Mrs De Peyster, the faithful follower of his fortunes in every situation—in camp and in quarters—amidst savage tribes and polished communities—in the most distant stations of Upper Canada, as well as in walled and garrisoned cities. Indeed, we may here state, without the slightest qualification, that there never was a more venerable and tenderly-attached pair. For more than fifty years, they shared the same bed, without having been separated in any one instance; and altogether, the gallant old colonel's bearing to his faithful and long-cherished spouse, resembled more what we seen of the age of chivalry, than the altered, and, as we suspect, not improved manners of the present times.'

\* At the stormy period of the French Revolution, the zeal and talents of our

Dr Currie, who must have been generally well informed respecting Burns's illness, says: 'His appetite now began to fail; his hand shook, and his voice faltered on any exertion or emotion. His pulse became weaker and more rapid, and pain in the larger joints, and in the hands and feet, deprived him of the enjoyment of refreshing sleep. Too much dejected in his spirits, and too well aware of his real situation to entertain hopes of recovery, he was ever musing on the approaching desolation of his family, and his spirits sank into a uniform gloom.'

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## MR THOMSON TO BURNS.

5th Feb. 1796.

O Robby Burns, are ye sleeping yet?  
Or are ye wauking, I would wit ?

THE pause you have made, my dear sir, is awful ! Am I never to hear from you again ? I know and I lament how much you have been afflicted of late ; but I trust that returning health and spirits will now enable you to resume the pen, and delight us with your musings. I have still about a dozen Scotch and Irish airs that I wish 'married to immortal verse.' We have several true-born Irishmen on the Scottish list ; but they are now naturalised, and reckoned our own good subjects. Indeed, we have none better. I believe I before told you, that I have been much urged by some friends to publish a collection of all our favourite airs and songs in octavo, embellished with a number of etchings by our ingenious friend Allan : what is your opinion of this ?

townsman were again called into exercise, in the embodying and training of the 1st Regiment of Dumfries Volunteers. On this occasion, his military ardour completely revived ; and so successfully did he labour in his vocation, that in the course of a very few months, his associates in arms displayed nearly all the steadiness and precision of a regiment of the line. Of this corps, the author of *Tam o' Shanter* was an original member ; and we have even heard it whispered, that the private and field-officer (the latter of whom had a great fondness for literature, and a ready talent at versification) engaged, unknown to each other, in a poetical controversy, which was conducted with considerable spirit through the respectable medium of the *Dumfries Journal*. Many members of the regiment still survive ; and to mark their regard for the memory of the deceased, the officers resumed the habiliments so long laid aside, while a party of the privates carried his body to the grave, supported by the staff of the Dumfriesshire militia.

'In his person, Colonel De Peyster was tall, soldier-like, and commanding ; in his manners, easy, affable, and open ; in his affections, warm, generous, and sincere ; in his principles, and particularly his political principles, firm even to inflexibility. No man, we believe, ever possessed more of the principle of vitality. Old age, which had silvered his hair, and furrowed his cheeks, appeared to make no impression on his inner man ; and those who knew him best declare that, up to the period of his last illness, his mind appeared as active, and his intellects as vigorous as they were fifty years ago. When the weather permitted, he still took his accustomed exercise, and walked round the billiard-table, or bestrode his gigantic charger, apparently with as little difficulty as a man of middle age. When so mounted, we have often fancied we beheld in him the last connecting link betwixt the old and new schools of military men.'

## BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

February 1796.

MANY thanks, my dear sir, for your handsome, elegant present to Mrs Burns, and for my remaining volume of P. Pindar. Peter is a delightful fellow, and a first favourite of mine.<sup>1</sup> I am much pleased with your idea of publishing a collection of our songs in octavo with etchings. I am extremely willing to lend every assistance in my power. The Irish airs I shall cheerfully undertake the task of finding verses for.

I have already, you know, equipt three with words, and the other day I strung up a kind of rhapsody to another Hibernian melody which I admire much.

## HEY FOR A LASS WI' A TOCHER.

TUNE—*Balinamona ora.*

Awa wi' your witchcraft o' beauty's alarms,  
The slender bit beauty you grasp in your arms:  
O gie me the lass that has acres o' charms,  
O gie me the lass wi' the weel-stockit farms.

## CHORUS.

Then hey for a lass wi' a tocher, then hey for a lass wi' a tocher;  
Then hey for a lass wi' a tocher—the nice yellow guineas  
for me.

Your beauty's a flower, in the morning that blows,  
And withers the faster, the faster it grows :  
But the rapturous charm o' the bonnie green knowes,  
Ilk spring they're new deckit wi' bonnie white yowes.  
And e'en when this beauty your bosom has blest,  
The brightest o' beauty may cloy, when possest ;  
But the sweet yellow darlings wi' Geordie imprest,  
The langer ye hae them, the mair they're carest.

If this will do, you have now four of my Irish engagement. In my by-past songs I dislike one thing; the name Chloris—I meant it as the fictitious name of a certain lady: but, on second thoughts, it is a high incongruity to have a Greek appellation to a Scottish pastoral ballad. Of this, and some things else, in my next: I have more amendments to propose. What you once mentioned of ‘flaxen locks’ is just: they cannot enter into an elegant description of beauty. Of this also again—God bless you!<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the original letter, the poet here adverts to some business matters, and allows some angry feelings regarding the Riddels to escape him.

<sup>2</sup> Our poet never explained what name he would have substituted for Chloris.—Mr THOMSON.

## MR THOMSON TO BURNS.

YOUR *Hey for a lass wi' a Tocher* is a most excellent song, and with you the subject is something new indeed. It is the first time I have seen you debasing the god of soft desire into an amateur of acres and guineas.

I am happy to find you approve of my proposed octavo edition. Allan has designed and etched about twenty plates, and I am to have my choice of them for that work. Independently of the Hogarthian humour with which they abound, they exhibit the character and costume of the Scottish peasantry with inimitable felicity. In this respect, he himself says, they will far exceed the aquatinta plates he did for the *Gentle Shepherd*, because in the etching he sees clearly what he is doing, but not so with the aquatinta, which he could not manage to his mind.

The Dutch boors of Ostade are scarcely more characteristic and natural than the Scottish figures in those etchings.

Some years before, Burns had taken a kindly zealous interest in behalf of Mr James Clarke, a schoolmaster at Moffat, whom he believed to be a worthy man, suffering under an unrighteous persecution.<sup>1</sup> He had lent Clarke some money, apparently not an inconsiderable sum—an interesting addition to the instances in which we have seen him in the unexpected relation of a creditor and accommodator. The debt had probably lain for years unnoticed by Burns, although money was never abundant with him, and a few debts of his own hung over his head. Now, when his salary was reduced, when the staple food of the country was so dear as to keep the humbler classes almost in a state of insurrection, and medical expenses were added to his ordinary outlay, Burns was obliged to address his old friend, with a request for repayment either in whole or in part. Mr Clarke, who was now prospering as a teacher at Forfar, answered on the 18th February, and his letter reveals by reflection the condition of the poor bard's affairs, as well as the kind feelings with which he had inspired the writer.

MY DEAR FRIEND—Your letter makes me very unhappy, the more so, as I had heard very flattering accounts of your situation some months ago. A note [20s.] is enclosed; and if such partial payments will be acceptable, this shall soon be followed by more. My appointment here has more than answered my expectations; but furnishing a large house, &c. has kept me still very poor; and the persecution I suffered from that rascal, Lord H——, brought me

<sup>1</sup> See vol. iii., pp. 185, 218.

into expenses which, with all my economy, I have not yet rubbed off. Be so kind as write me. Your disinterested friendship has made an impression which time cannot efface. Believe me, my dear Burns, yours in sincerity,

JAMES CLARKE.<sup>1</sup>

Miss Grace Aiken, a very young lady, the daughter of Burns's early patron, Mr Robert Aiken of Ayr, had occasion during spring to pass through Dumfries, on her way to pay a visit in Liverpool. In walking along the street towards the residence of her friend, Mrs Copland, she passed a tall, slovenly-looking man, of sickly aspect, who presently uttered an exclamation which caused her to turn about to see who it was. It was Burns; but so changed from his former self, that she could hardly have recognised him, except for the sound of his voice in addressing her. On her asking him playfully, if he had been going to pass her without notice, he spoke as if he had felt that it was proper for him, now-a-days, to leave his old friends to be the first to hold forth the hand of friendship. At her pressing request, he accompanied her to the house of Mrs Copland; he even yielded, but not till after much entreaty, to go home and put himself in order, that he might return at four to dinner. He spent the evening cheerfully in their temperate society, and retired about midnight. The circumstance is worthy of notice, because neither Mrs Copland nor any of her friends—all members of the best society in Dumfries—had any objection to entertaining or meeting Burns. The hostess had not seen him for a considerable time, but from no cause affecting the reputation of the poet—only, she understood that he had of late shewn a preference for what might positively as well as comparatively be called low society—a circumstance she greatly lamented. All this shews that Burns's social discredit in his latter days must have been the result of no universal feeling among his fellow-citizens. The fact seems to be, that while many condemned and forsook him—the provincial clergy to a man—on the other hand, many, sensible that his faults were rather allied to imprudence and indecorum than to turpitude, regarded him with forbearance, if not with undiminished esteem and affection.

The state of Burns's health on the 14th of April, was such as to allow him to be present at a meeting of the Mason Lodge that evening. On this occasion, Captain Adam Gordon, brother of his friend Mr Gordon of Kenmure, was admitted apprentice. It is not unlikely that, both on this occasion and on the 28th of

<sup>1</sup> The original of this letter is in possession of Robert Cole, Esq., Upper Norton Place, London.

January, Burns made an effort, if not a sacrifice, for the honour of persons whom he regarded as friends.<sup>1</sup>

'It was hoped by some of his friends,' says Dr Currie, 'that if he could live through the months of spring, the succeeding season might restore him. But they were disappointed.' The month of May came in with more than its poetical beauty and geniality;<sup>2</sup> but it only could charm the poet's feeling, it could infuse no new vigour into his languid frame. The summer wind blew unrefreshing for him. Being now entirely laid aside from duty, Burns understood that, as usual in such cases, his salary would be reduced; and this, we may well believe, was no small addition to the distresses he suffered. Dr Currie informs us, that the Board, to their honour, continued his full emoluments; but it appears that this resolution was not taken, or at least not intimated, while the poor poet was capable of being comforted by the intelligence. It is certain that the duty, necessary, we presume, for keeping up the reduced pay, was all the time performed out of kindness for Burns by a young expectant of Excise named Stobie; to whom, therefore, in reality, the gratitude of those who love the memory of the bard must be considered as chiefly due. Dr Currie also states, that 'Mr Graham of Fintry, hearing of the poet's illness, though unacquainted with its dangerous nature, made an offer of his assistance towards procuring him the means of preserving his health.' The letter containing this offer was

<sup>1</sup> The following memoranda from the record of the Lodge may be perused with some interest. They refer to all the meetings which took place during the period of Burns's connection with the Lodge.

27th Dec. 1791.—Burns present.

6th Feb. 1792.—Burns present. On this occasion, Philip Ditcher, Esq., of 3d regt. of Dragoons, now quartered in Dumfries, is entered apprentice.

14th May, 1792.—Burns present. Chas. Pye, Captains Waller, Watson, and Parslow, of 3d regt. of Dragoons, all admitted as apprentices.

31st May 1792.—Burns present.

5th June 1792.—Burns present. Ed. Andrews of the Dragoons, and John Syme, Esq. of Barncailzie, admitted brethren, without fees.

22d Nov. 1792.—Burns present.

30th Nov. 1792.—Burns present, and elected senior warden.

30th Nov. 1793.—The senior warden [Burns] present. Sam. Clark, Junr., admitted a member.

27th Dec. 1793.—Burns not present. [He was at this time indisposed.]

6th May 1794.—Burns not mentioned. D. M'Culloch admitted a member.

29th Nov. 1794.—Burns present.

30th Nov. 1795.—Burns not mentioned.

28th Dec. 1795.—Burns not mentioned.

28th Jan. 1796.—Burns present. Appeared Mr James Georgeson, mercht. in Liverpool, who being recommended by Brother Burns, was admitted apprentice. His fees applied towards defraying the expenses of the night.

14th April 1796.—Burns present. Capt. Adam Gordon admitted apprentice.

16th April 1796.—Burns not mentioned.

<sup>2</sup> 'It is the finest weather in the world. The whole country is covered with green and blossoms; and the sun shines perpetually through a light east wind, which would have brought you here from Boston since it began to blow.'—Jeffrey, to his brother, 20th May 1796. *Cockburn's Life of Lord Jeffrey.*

dated on the 15th July, so that the poet could not have received it more than a couple of days before consciousness left him.<sup>1</sup>

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## BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

*April 1796.*

ALAS! my dear Thomson, I fear it will be some time ere I tune my lyre again! ‘By Babel streams I have sat and wept’ almost ever since I wrote you last: I have only known existence by the pressure of the heavy hand of sickness, and have counted time by the repercussions of pain! Rheumatism, cold, and fever, have formed to me a terrible combination. I close my eyes in misery, and open them without hope. I look on the vernal day, and say with poor Fergusson—

‘Say wherefore has an all-indulgent Heaven  
Light to the comfortless and wretched given?’

This will be delivered to you by a Mrs Hyslop, landlady of the Globe Tavern here, which for these many years has been my howff,<sup>2</sup> and where our friend Clarke and I have had many a merry squeeze. I mention this, because she will be a very proper hand to bring that seal you talk of. I am highly delighted with Mr Allan’s etchings. *Woo’d an’ married an’ a’*, is admirable! The grouping is beyond all praise. The expression of the figures, conformable to the story in the ballad, is absolutely faultless perfection. I next admire *Turnpike*. What I like least is *Jenny said to Jocky*. Besides the female being in her appearance quite a virago, if you take her stooping into the account, she is at least two inches taller than her lover. Poor Cleghorn! I sincerely sympathise with him. Happy I am to think that he yet has a well-grounded hope of health and enjoyment in this world. As for me—but that is a damning subject! Farewell!

R. B.

<sup>1</sup> ‘Another charge of cruelty has been brought forward against the Board—that of refusing his full salary during his illness, which a little explanation will set to rights. A few years previous to this period, an addition of £.15 per annum had been made to the salaries, accompanied with the condition of being stopped to officers not doing duty. This still existed in Burns’s time, and he was no worse treated than others in similar circumstances of indisposition. It is here incumbent on me to mention, that Commissioner Graham, regretting, I have no doubt, his inability to comply with the poet’s wishes as to the full salary, sent him a private donation of £.5, which, I believe, nearly or totally compensated the loss.’—FINDLATER, *in Glasgow Courier, March 1834.*

<sup>2</sup> A place of resort much frequented by any person is, in Scotland, called his *howff*.

The windows of that common room in the Globe Tavern, which might be more particularly called Burns’s *Howff*, still bear some scribblings in his handwriting.

## MR THOMSON TO BURNS.

4th May 1796.

I NEED not tell you, my good sir, what concern the receipt of your last gave me, and how much I sympathise in your sufferings. But do not, I beseech you, give yourself up to despondency, or speak the language of despair. The vigour of your constitution, I trust, will soon set you on your feet again; and then, it is to be hoped, you will see the wisdom and the necessity of taking due care of a life so valuable to your family, to your friends, and to the world.

Trusting that your next will bring agreeable accounts of your convalescence and returning good spirits, I remain, with sincere regard, yours.

P.S.—Mrs Hyslop, I doubt not, delivered the gold seal to you in good condition.

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## BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

[About May 17, 1796.]

MY DEAR SIR—I once mentioned to you an air which I have long admired—*Here's a health to them that's awa, hiney*, but I forget if you took any notice of it. I have just been trying to suit it with verses, and I beg leave to recommend the air to your attention once more. I have only begun it.

## J E S S Y.

## CHORUS.

Here's a healthi to ane I loe dear!  
Here's a healthi to ane I loe dear!  
Thou art sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet,  
And soft as their parting tear—Jessy!

Although thou maun never be mine,  
Although even hope is denied:  
'Tis sweeter for thee despairing,  
Than aught in the world beside—Jessy!

I mourn through the gay, gaudy day,  
As, hopeless, I muse on thy charms;  
But welcome the dream o' sweet slumber,  
For then I am lock't in thy arms—Jessy!

I guess by the dear angel smile,  
I guess by the love-rolling ee;  
But why urge the tender confession,  
'Gainst fortune's fell cruel decree—Jessy!

This will be delivered by a Mr Lewars, a young fellow of uncommon merit; indeed by far the cleverest fellow I have met with in this part of the world. His only fault is D-m-cratic heresy. As he will be a day or two in town, you will have leisure, if you choose, to write me by him; and if you have a spare half hour to spend with him, I shall place your kindness to my account. I have no copies of the songs I have sent you, and I have taken a fancy to review them all, and possibly may mend some of them: so, when you have complete leisure, I will thank you for either the originals or copies. I had rather be the author of five well-written songs than of ten otherwise. My verses to *Cauld Kail* I will suppress; as also those to *Laddie lie near me*. They are neither worthy of my name nor of your book. I have great hopes that the genial influence of the approaching summer will set me to rights, but as yet I cannot boast of returning health. I have now reason to believe that my complaint is a flying gout—a sad business!

Do let me know how Cleghorn is, and remember me to him.

This should have been delivered to you a month ago, but my friend's trunk miscarried, and was not recovered till he came here again.<sup>1</sup> I am still very poorly, but should like much to hear from you.

Jessy, the heroine of the song above cited, was a sister of Lewars, an amiable young woman, who acted the part of a ministering angel in his house during the whole of this dismal period of distress. It is curious to find him even in his present melancholy circumstances, imagining himself as the lover of his wife's kind-hearted young friend, as if the position of the mistress were the most exalted in which his fancy could place any woman he admired or towards whom he felt gratitude.

This is not, however, the only strain of fancied love which Burns addressed to Jessy Lewars. The lady relates that, one morning she had a call from the poet, when he offered, if she would play him any tune of which she was fond, and for which she desired new verses, to gratify her in her wish to the best of his ability. She placed herself at the pianoforte, and played over several times the air of an old song beginning with the words—

The robin cam to the wren's nest,  
And keekit in, and keekit in:  
O weel's me on your auld pow!  
Wad ye be in, wad ye be in?  
Ye'se ne'er get leave to lie without,  
And I within, and I within,  
As lang's I hae an auld clout,  
To row ye in, to row ye in.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The letter appears to have been despatched by post on the 17th June. Currie unaccountably divides the letter into two.

<sup>2</sup> This set of the old song is from *Johnson's Museum*, v. 419.

As soon as his ear got accustomed to the melody, Burns sat down, and in a very few minutes he produced the beautiful song:

## OH, WERT THOU IN THE CAULD BLAST.

Oh, wert thou in the cauld blast  
 On yonder lea, on yonder lea,  
 My plaidie to the angry airt,  
 I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee :  
 Or did misfortune's bitter storms  
 Around thee blow, around thee blow,  
 Thy bield should be my bosom, protection  
 To share it a', to share it a'.

Or were I in the wildest waste,  
 Sae black and bare, sae black and bare,  
 The desert were a paradise,  
 If thou wert there, if thou wert there :  
 Or were I monarch o' the globe,  
 Wi' thee to reign, wi' thee to reign,  
 The brightest jewel in my crown  
 Wad be my queen, wad be my queen.

The anecdote is a trivial one in itself; but we feel that the circumstances—the deadly illness of the poet, the benevolent worth of Miss Lewars, and the reasons for his grateful desire of obliging her—give it a value. It is curious, and something more, to connect it with the subsequent musical fate of the song, for many years after, when Burns had become a star in memory's galaxy, and Jessy Lewars was spending her quiet years of widowhood over her book or her knitting in a little parlour in Maxwell-town, the verses attracted the regard of Felix Mendelssohn, who seems to have divined the peculiar feeling beyond all common love which Burns breathed through them. By that admirable artist, so like our great bard in a too early death, they were married to an air of exquisite pathos, ‘such as the meeting soul may pierce.’ Burns, Jessy Lewars, Felix Mendelssohn—genius, goodness, and tragic melancholy, all combined in one solemn and profoundly affecting association!

Parliament being dissolved in May, there arose a new contest for the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright. Mr Heron was opposed on this occasion by the Hon. Montgomery Stewart, a younger son of the Earl of Galloway. Burns, reduced in health as he was—confined, indeed, to a sick-chamber—could not remain an unconcerned onlooker. He produced a ballad at once more allegorical and more bitter against Mr Heron's opponents than any launched on the former occasion. There is a set of vagrant traffickers in

Scotland, somewhat superior to pedlers, and called *Troggers*. They deal in clothes and miscellaneous articles, and their wares are recognised under the general name of *Troggins*. Burns conceived a trogger, with the characters of the Galloway party for a stock.

## AN EXCELLENT NEW SONG.

TUNE—*Buy Broom Besoms*.

Wha will buy my troggins,  
Fine election ware;  
Broken trade o' Broughton,  
A' in high repair.  
Buy braw troggins,  
Frae the banks o' Dee;  
Wha wants troggins  
Let him come to me.

There's a noble earl's  
Fame and high renown,<sup>1</sup>  
For an auld sang—  
It's thought the gudes were stown.  
Buy braw troggins, &c.

Here's the worth o' Broughton,<sup>2</sup>  
In a needle's ee;  
Here's a reputation  
Tint by Balmaghie.<sup>3</sup>  
Buy braw troggins, &c.

Here's its stuff and lining,  
Cardoness's head;<sup>4</sup>  
Fine for a sodger,  
A' the wale o' lead.  
Buy braw troggins, &c.

choice

Here's a little wadset,  
Buittle's scrap o' truth,<sup>5</sup>  
Pawned in a gin-shop,  
Quenching holy drouth.  
Buy braw troggins, &c.

mortgage

Here's an honest conscience  
Might a prince adorn;  
Frae the downs o' Tinwald—  
So was never worn.<sup>6</sup>  
Buy braw troggins, &c.

<sup>1</sup> The Earl of Galloway.<sup>2</sup> Mr Murray of Broughton.<sup>3</sup> Gordon of Balmaghie.<sup>4</sup> Gordon of Cardoness.<sup>5</sup> Rev. George Maxwell, minister of Buittle.<sup>6</sup> A bitter allusion to Mr Bushby.

Here's armorial bearings,  
 Frae the manse o' Urr;  
 The crest, a sour crab-apple,  
 Rotten at the core.<sup>1</sup>  
 Buy braw troggin, &c.

Here is Satan's picture,  
 Like a bizzard gled,  
 Pouncing poor Redcastle,<sup>2</sup> kite  
 Sprawlin' as a taed. toad  
 Buy braw troggin, &c.

Here's the font where Douglas  
 Stane and mortar names;  
 Lately used at C—  
 Christening M[urray's] crimes.  
 Buy braw troggin, &c.

Here's the worth and wisdom  
 Collieston can boast;<sup>3</sup>  
 By a thievish midge  
 They had been nearly lost. gnat  
 Buy braw troggin, &c.

Here is Murray's fragments  
 O' the ten commands;  
 Gifted by black Jock,<sup>4</sup>  
 To get them aff his hands.  
 Buy braw troggin, &c.

Saw ye e'er sic troggin?  
 If to buy ye're slack,  
 Hornie's turnin' chapman—  
 He'll buy a' the pack. the Devil  
 Buy braw troggin  
 Frae the banks o' Dee;  
 Wha wants troggin  
 Let him come to me.

It gives a new idea of Burns, that he should have been able to put such a keen edge upon his satiric weapon, and wield it with such power, within a few weeks of his death.

Mr Heron was also successful in this contest, an event which did not happen till the poor bard had been laid in the dust. The election being subjected to the judgment of a committee, Mr Heron was unseated. He died on his way down to Scotland. Allan

<sup>1</sup> This appears to have been the retaliation for the epigram launched by the Rev. Mr Muirhead against Burns after the election of last year.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Sloan Lawrie of Redcastle. <sup>3</sup> Copland of Collieston. <sup>4</sup> John Bushby.

Cunningham says: ‘It was one of the dreams of his day—in which Burns indulged—that, by some miraculous movement, the Tory councillors of the king would be dismissed, and the Whigs, with the Prince of Wales at their head, rule and reign in their stead. That Heron aided in strengthening this “devout imagination” is certain: but then the Laird of Kerrougheer was the victim of the delusion himself.’

Dr Currie says: ‘The sense of his poverty, and of the approaching distress of his infant family, pressed heavily on Burns as he lay on the bed of death; yet he alluded to his indigence, at times, with something approaching to his wonted gaiety. “What business,” said he to Dr Maxwell, who attended him with the utmost zeal, “has a physician to waste his time on me? I am a poor pigeon not worth plucking. Alas! I have not feathers enough upon me to carry me to my grave.”’ In even a gayer spirit, he would sometimes scribble verses of compliment to sweet young Jessy Lewars, as she tripped about on her missions of gentle charity from hall to kitchen and from kitchen to hall. His surgeon, Mr Brown, one day brought in a long sheet, containing the particulars of a menagerie of wild beasts which he had just been visiting. As Mr Brown was handing the sheet to Miss Lewars, Burns seized it, and wrote upon it a couple of verses with red chalk; after which he handed it to Miss Lewars, saying that it was now fit to be presented to a lady. She still possesses the sheet.

Talk not to me of savages  
From Afric’s burning sun;  
No savage e'er could rend my heart,  
As, Jessy, thou hast done.  
But Jessy’s lovely hand in mine,  
A mutual faith to plight,  
Not even to view the heavenly choir  
Would be so blest a sight.

On another occasion, while Miss Lewars was waiting upon him in his sick-chamber, he took up a crystal goblet containing wine and water, and after writing upon it the following verses, in the character of a *Toast*, presented it to her:—

Fill me with the rosy wine,  
Call a toast—a toast divine;  
Give the poet’s darling flame,  
Lovely Jessy be the name;  
Then thou mayest freely boast  
Thou hast given a peerless toast.

At this time of trouble, on Miss Lewars complaining of indisposition, he said, to provide for the worst, he would write her epitaph. He accordingly inscribed the following on another goblet, saying: ‘That will be a companion to the *Toast*:’—

Say, sages, what’s the charm on earth  
Can turn Death’s dart aside ?  
It is not purity and worth,  
Else Jessy had not died.

On Miss Lewars recovering a little, the poet said: ‘There is a poetic reason for it,’ and wrote the following:—

But rarely seen since Nature’s birth,  
The natives of the sky ;  
Yet still one seraph’s left on earth,  
For Jessy did not die.<sup>1</sup>

Then he would also jest about her admirers, and speculate on her matrimonial destiny. ‘There’s Bob Spalding,’ he would say; ‘he has not as much brains as a midge could lean its elbow on: he wont do.’ And so on with the rest, generally ending with the declaration that, ‘being a poet, he was also a prophet—for anciently they were the same thing—and he could therefore foretell that James Thomson would be the man’—a prediction which time fulfilled.

At the approach of the 4th of June, Mrs Walter Riddel, to whom he had become in some measure reconciled, desired him to go to the Birthday Assembly, to shew his loyalty, and at the same time asked him for a copy of a song he had lately written. He answered as follows:—

#### TO MRS RIDDEL.

DUMFRIES, 4th June 1796.

I AM in such miserable health, as to be utterly incapable of shewing my loyalty in any way. Racked as I am with rheumatisms, I meet every face with a greeting, like that of Balak to Balaam: ‘Come, curse me, Jacob ; and come, defy me, Israel !’ So say I : Come, curse me that east wind ; and come, defy me the north ! Would you have me in such circumstances copy you out a love-song ?

<sup>1</sup> This most excellent woman, whose memory must be for ever endeared, not only to the descendants of Burns, but to all his countrymen, is still living (1852) in Dumfries, the widow of the late Mr James Thomson, solicitor.

I may perhaps see you on Saturday, but I will not be at the ball. Why should I?—‘man delights not me, nor woman either!’ Can you supply me with the song, *Let us all be unhappy together?*—do, if you can, and oblige *le pauvre misérable*,

R. B.

The progress of the unhappy poet’s disease, and the gradual setting of his hopes of life, are best shewn in the letters he wrote at this time. What immediately follows was addressed to his worthy friend the schoolmaster of Forfar, whom we have seen writing to Burns in February, with a small instalment towards the payment of a debt due to him. It is a letter of some importance, from the light which it throws upon the bard’s present circumstances. He had requested money from Clarke in February; a small sum to account had been promptly sent, and he now asked for a further instalment. Such a fact at once shews the straits to which he was reduced by his illness and the reduction of his salary, and how little was required to help him through the difficulty.

TO MR JAMES CLARKE,

SCHOOLMASTER, FORFAR.

DUMFRIES, 26<sup>th</sup> June 1796.

MY DEAR CLARKE—Still, still the victim of affliction! Were you to see the emaciated figure who now holds the pen to you, you would not know your old friend. Whether I shall ever get about again, is only known to Him, the Great Unknown, whose creature I am. Alas, Clarke! I begin to fear the worst. As to my individual self, I am tranquil, and would despise myself if I were not; but Burns’s poor widow, and half-a-dozen of his dear little ones—helpless orphans!—there I am weak as a woman’s tear.<sup>1</sup> Enough of this! ’Tis half of my disease.

I duly received your last, enclosing the note.<sup>2</sup> It came extremely in time, and I am much obliged by your punctuality. Again I must request you to do me the same kindness. Be so very good as, by return of post, to enclose me another note. I trust you can do it without inconvenience, and it will seriously oblige me. If I must go, I shall leave a few friends behind me, whom I shall regret while consciousness remains. I know I shall live in their remembrance. Adieu, dear Clarke. That I shall ever see you again is, I am afraid, highly improbable.

R. B.

<sup>1</sup> ‘But I am weaker than a woman’s tear.’—*Troilus and Cressida*.<sup>2</sup> Pound-notes are so much the current money of Scotland, that the term a note is constantly used to signify twenty shillings.

TO MR JAMES JOHNSON, EDINBURGH.

DUMFRIES, 4th July 1796.

How are you, my dear friend, and how comes on your fifth volume? You may probably think that for some time past I have neglected you and your work; but, alas! the hand of pain, and sorrow, and care, has these many months lain heavy on me. Personal and domestic affliction have almost entirely banished that alacrity and life with which I used to woo the rural Muse of Scotia.

You are a good, worthy, honest fellow, and have a good right to live in this world—because you deserve it. Many a merry meeting this publication has given us, and possibly it may give us more, though, alas! I fear it. This protracting, slow, consuming illness which hangs over me, will, I doubt much, my ever-dear friend, arrest my sun before he has well reached his middle career, and will turn over the poet to far more important concerns than studying the brilliancy of wit or the pathos of sentiment. However, *hope* is the cordial of the human heart, and I endeavour to cherish it as well as I can.

Let me hear from you as soon as convenient. Your work is a great one; and now that it is finished, I see, if we were to begin again, two or three things that might be mended; yet I will venture to prophesy, that to future ages your publication will be the text-book and standard of Scottish song and music.

I am ashamed to ask another favour of you, because you have been so very good already; but my wife has a very particular friend of hers, a young lady who sings well, to whom she wishes to present the *Scots Musical Museum*. If you have a spare copy, will you be so obliging as to send it by the very first *fly*, as I am anxious to have it soon?<sup>1</sup> Yours ever,

R. B.

On the day of the date of this letter, Burns was removed to Brow, a sea-bathing hamlet on the Solway, in the hope of improvement from bathing, country quarters, and riding.

TO MR GEORGE THOMSON.

Brow, 4th July.

MY DEAR SIR—I received your songs; but my health is so precarious, nay, dangerously situated, that as a last effort I am here at sea-bathing quarters. Besides my inveterate rheumatism, my appetite is quite gone, and I am so emaciated as to be scarce able to support myself on my own legs. Alas! is this a time

<sup>1</sup> In this humble and delicate manner did poor Burns ask for a copy of a work of which he was principally the founder, and to which he had contributed, *gratuitously*, not less than 184 *original, altered, and collected songs!* The editor has seen 180 transcribed by his own hand for the *Museum*.—CROMIE.

for me to woo the Muses? However, I am still anxiously willing to serve your work, and, if possible, shall try. I would not like to see another employed, unless you could lay your hand upon a poet whose productions would be equal to the rest. You will see my remarks and alterations on the margin of each song. My address is still Dumfries. Farewell, and God bless you!

R. BURNS.

The handwriting of the above is smaller and less steady than the other letters—like the writing of one who, in the interval, had become an old man.

Mrs Walter Riddel, being likewise in poor health, was now living at a place not far from the village, and hearing of Burns's arrival, she invited him to dinner, and sent her carriage to bring him to her house, for he was unable to walk. ‘I was struck,’ says this lady in a confidential letter to a friend written soon after, ‘with his appearance on entering the room. The stamp of death was imprinted on his features. He seemed already touching the brink of eternity. His first salutation was: “Well, madam, have you any commands for the other world?” I replied, that it seemed a doubtful case which of us should be there soonest, and that I hoped he would yet live to write my epitaph. He looked in my face with an air of great kindness, and expressed his concern at seeing me look so ill, with his accustomed sensibility. At table, he ate little or nothing, and he complained of having entirely lost the tone of his stomach. We had a long and serious conversation about his present situation, and the approaching termination of all his earthly prospects. He spoke of his death without any of the ostentation of philosophy, but with firmness as well as feeling, as an event likely to happen very soon, and which gave him concern chiefly from leaving his four children so young and unprotected, and his wife in so interesting a situation—in hourly expectation of lying in of a fifth. He mentioned, with seeming pride and satisfaction, the promising genius of his eldest son, and the flattering marks of approbation he had received from his teachers, and dwelt particularly on his hopes of that boy’s future conduct and merit. His anxiety for his family seemed to hang heavy upon him, and the more perhaps from the reflection, that he had not done them all the justice he was so well qualified to do. Passing from this subject, he shewed great concern about the care of his literary fame, and particularly the publication of his posthumous works. He said he was well aware that his death would occasion some noise, and that every scrap of his writing would be revived against him to the injury of his future reputation: that letters and verses written with unguarded and improper freedom, and which he earnestly wished to have buried in oblivion, would

be handed about by idle vanity or malevolence, when no dread of his resentment would restrain them, or prevent the censures of shrill-tongued malice, or the insidious sarcasms of envy, from pouring forth all their venom to blast his fame.

'He lamented that he had written many epigrams on persons against whom he entertained no enmity, and whose characters he should be sorry to wound; and many indifferent poetical pieces, which he feared would now, with all their imperfections on their head, be thrust upon the world. On this account, he deeply regretted having deferred to put his papers in a state of arrangement, as he was now quite incapable of the exertion.' The lady goes on to mention many other topics of a private nature on which he spoke. 'The conversation,' she adds, 'was kept up with great evenness and animation on his side. I had seldom seen his mind greater or more collected. There was frequently a considerable degree of vivacity in his sallies, and they would probably have had a greater share, had not the concern and dejection I could not disguise damped the spirit of pleasantry he seemed not unwilling to indulge.'

'We parted about sunset on the evening of that day (the 5th of July 1796): the next day I saw him again, and we parted to meet no more!'

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TO MR CUNNINGHAM.

BROW, *Sea-bathing Quarters, 7th July 1796.*

MY DEAR CUNNINGHAM—I received yours here this moment, and am indeed highly flattered with the approbation of the literary circle you mention—a literary circle inferior to none in the two kingdoms. Alas! my friend, I fear the voice of the bard will soon be heard among you no more. For these eight or ten months, I have been ailing, sometimes bedfast, and sometimes not; but these last three months I have been tortured with an excruciating rheumatism, which has reduced me to nearly the last stage. You actually would not know me if you saw me. Pale, emaciated, and so feeble as occasionally to need help from my chair—my spirits fled! fled!—but I can no more on the subject; only the medical folks tell me that my last and only chance is bathing, and country quarters, and riding. The deuce of the matter is this: when an exciseman is off duty, his salary is reduced to L.35 instead of L.50. What way, in the name of thrift, shall I maintain myself, and keep a horse in country quarters, with a wife and five children at home, on L.35? I mention this, because I had intended to beg your utmost interest, and that of all the friends you can muster, to move our commissioners of Excise to grant me the full salary; I daresay you know them all personally. If

they do not grant it me, I must lay my account with an exit truly *en poète*—if I die not of disease, I must perish with hunger.

I have sent you one of the songs; the other my memory does not serve me with, and I have no copy here; but I shall be at home soon, when I will send it you. Apropos to being at home: Mrs Burns threatens in a week or two to add one more to my paternal charge, which, if of the right gender, I intend shall be introduced to the world by the respectable designation of *Alexander Cunningham Burns*. My last was *James Glencairn*, so you can have no objection to the company of nobility. Farewell!

R. B.

## TO MR GILBERT BURNS.

[Sunday], 10th July 1796.

DEAR BROTHER—It will be no very pleasing news to you to be told that I am dangerously ill, and not likely to get better. An inveterate rheumatism has reduced me to such a state of debility, and my appetite is so totally gone, that I can scarcely stand on my legs. I have been a week at sea-bathing, and I will continue there, or in a friend's house in the country, all the summer. God keep my wife and children; if I am taken from their head, they will be poor indeed. I have contracted one or two serious debts, partly from my illness these many months, partly from too much thoughtlessness as to expense when I came to town, that will cut in too much on the little I leave them in your hands. Remember me to my mother. Yours,

R. B.

For several months, Mrs Dunlop had maintained an obstinate silence towards Burns, notwithstanding his having frequently addressed her. The cause has not been explained, but may be surmised. The unfortunate poet now wrote to her for the last time.

## TO MRS DUNLOP.

Brow, 12th July 1796.

MADAM—I have written you so often, without receiving any answer, that I would not trouble you again, but for the circumstances in which I am. An illness which has long hung about me, in all probability will speedily send me beyond that *bourn whence no traveller returns*. Your friendship, with which for many years you honoured me, was a friendship dearest to my soul. Your conversation, and especially your correspondence, were at once highly entertaining and instructive. With what pleasure did I use to break up the seal! The remembrance yet adds one pulse more to my poor palpitating heart. Farewell!!!

R. B.

Dr Currie states, that Burns had the pleasure of receiving an explanation of Mrs Dunlop's silence, and an assurance of the continuance of her friendship to his widow and children; but though her friendly attentions to the latter are undoubted, it was Mrs Burns's constant assertion, that there must have been a mistake as to her husband having received an explanation of Mrs Dunlop's silence in any form.

After a few days, sea-bathing seemed to have in some degree eased the pains of our bard, so that he once more began to entertain hopes of life. At this crisis, a sad stroke fell upon him, in the form of a letter from a Dumfries solicitor, urging payment of a bill, now ascertained to have amounted to L.7, 4s., due, or overdue, to a draper for his volunteer uniform. It was generally believed of this tradesman by his contemporaries, that he would never have harassed the poor poet for the debt; indeed, it has been represented, that Mr Williamson (for such was his name)<sup>1</sup> had placed this and some other overdue accounts in the solicitor's hands, merely because it seemed the most convenient mode of collecting them; and it is the report of Burns's eldest son, that the letter addressed by Mr Matthew Penn to Burns, did not contain any threatening expressions. In Scotland, however, a letter from a writer is generally regarded as a menacing step on the part of a creditor; and so did it appear on the present occasion to Burns, whose mind was too gloomy and excitable to take calm views on any such matter. Struck with terror lest the worst extremities should be proceeded to, he bethought him of two friends who might be appealed to for the means of averting so dire a calamity.

TO MR JAMES BURNES,

WRITER, MONTROSE.

DUMFRIES, 12th July.

MY DEAR COUSIN—When you offered me money assistance, little did I think I should want it so soon. A rascal of a haberdasher, to whom I owe a considerable bill, taking it into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process against me, and will infallibly put my emaciated body into jail. Will you be so good as to accommodate me, and that by return of post, with ten pounds? Oh, James! did you know the pride of my heart, you would feel doubly for me! Alas! I am not used to beg. The worst of it is, my health was coming about finely. You know, and my physician assured me, that

<sup>1</sup> Burns had been a debtor to Williamson on previous occasions, and does not appear to have been prompt in his payments. In March 1794, Messrs Brown and Williamson, clothiers, announced to Burns that they were dissolving their copartnery, and collecting the debts due to it. They enclosed an account for a balance of L.7, 9s., due by him since the beginning of the preceding year.

melancholy and low spirits are half my disease—guess, then, my horrors since this business began. If I had it settled, I would be, I think, quite well in a manner. How shall I use the language to you—oh, do not disappoint me! but strong necessity's curst command.

I have been thinking over and over my brother's affairs, and I fear I must cut him up; but on this I will correspond at another time, particularly as I shall [require] your advice.

Forgive me for once more mentioning by return of post—save me from the horrors of a jail!

My compliments to my friend James,<sup>1</sup> and to all the rest. I do not know what I have written. The subject is so horrible, I dare not look it over again. Farewell!

R. B.

#### BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

BROW, on the Solway Frith, 12th July 1796.

AFTER all my boasted independence, curst necessity compels me to implore you for five pounds. A cruel scoundrel of a haberdasher, to whom I owe an account, taking it into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process, and will infallibly put me into jail. Do, for God's sake, send me that sum, and that by return of post. Forgive me this earnestness; but the horrors of a jail have made me half distracted. I do not ask all this gratuitously; for, upon returning health, I hereby promise and engage to furnish you with five pounds' worth of the neatest song-genius you have seen. I tried my hand on *Rothesmurchie* this morning. The measure is so difficult, that it is impossible to infuse much genius into the lines; they are on the other side. Forgive, forgive me!

To think of Burns composing love-verses in these circumstances! It was to happy days spent on the banks of the Devon during the short blaze of his fame, and to Charlotte Hamilton and her youthful loveliness, that his mind reverted at this gloomy time.

#### FAIREST MAID ON DEVON BANKS.

TUNE—*Rothesmurchie*.

##### CHORUS.

Fairest maid on Devon banks,  
Crystal Devon, winding Devon,  
Wilt thou lay that frown aside,  
And smile as thou wert wont to do?

<sup>1</sup> The son of Mr Burnes, now a youth of sixteen. This respectable man, the father of Sir Alexander Burnes, died in spring 1852.

Full well thou know'st I love thee dear,  
Couldst thou to malice lend an ear?  
Oh, did not love exclaim: 'Forbear,  
Nor use a faithful lover so!'

Then come, thou fairest of the fair,  
Those wonted smiles, oh, let me share!  
And by thy beauteous self I swear,  
No love but thine my heart shall know.

Mr Burnes, who was not a rich man, but possessed, like his illustrious relative, of a liberal heart, immediately sent the sum asked. Mr Thomson, who was in circumstances not greatly superior to those of Burns himself, but who also possessed a liberal nature, had been ruminating on the illness of the poet, and asking himself if, at such a time, a fresh present of five pounds was not likely to be taken more kindly than that which he had sent three years before. Between two such enthusiasts, in their respective domestic circumstances, such a donation did not truly bear the air of meanness which some writers have since attributed to it. At all events, it was what Mr Thomson had it in his power to give, and he sent it with all his usual cordiality.

## MR THOMSON TO BURNS.

14th July 1796.

MY DEAR SIR—Ever since I received your melancholy letters by Mrs Hyslop, I have been ruminating in what manner I could endeavour to alleviate your sufferings. Again and again I thought of a pecuniary offer, but the recollection of one of your letters on this subject, and the fear of offending your independent spirit, checked my resolution. I thank you heartily, therefore, for the frankness of your letter of the 12th, and with great pleasure enclose a draft for the very sum I proposed sending. Would I were Chancellor of the Exchequer but for one day, for your sake!

Pray, my good sir, is it not possible for you to muster a volume of poetry? If too much trouble to you, in the present state of your health, some literary friend might be found here, who would select and arrange from your manuscripts, and take upon him the task of editor. In the meantime, it could be advertised to be published by subscription. Do not shun this mode of obtaining the value of your labour: remember, Pope published the *Iliad* by subscription. Think of this, my dear Burns, and do not reckon me intrusive with my advice. You are too well convinced of the respect and friendship I bear you, to impute anything I say to an unworthy motive. Yours faithfully.

The verses to *Rothemurchie* will answer finely. I am happy to see you can still tune your lyre.

A kind-hearted friend, Mr Gracie, banker in Dumfries, sent to inquire after the poet's health, and to offer his carriage to bring him back to his home.

## TO JAMES GRACIE, ESQ.

BROW, *Wednesday morning [13th July.]*

MY DEAR SIR—It would [be] doing high injustice to this place not to acknowledge that my rheumatisms have derived great benefits from it already; but, alas! my loss of appetite still continues. I shall not need your kind offer *this week*, and I return to town the beginning of next week, it not being a tide-week. I am detaining a man in a burning hurry. So, God bless you! R. B.

The delicate condition of Mrs Burns had of course prevented her from accompanying her husband to Brow. He addressed her thus, apparently on the 14th:

## TO MRS BURNS.

BROW, *Thursday.*

MY DEAREST LOVE—I delayed writing until I could tell you what effect sea-bathing was likely to produce. It would be injustice to deny that it has eased my pains, and I think has strengthened me; but my appetite is still extremely bad. No flesh nor fish can I swallow; porridge and milk are the only thing I can taste. I am very happy to hear, by Miss Jess Lewars, that you are all well. My very best and kindest compliments to her, and to all the children. I will see you on Sunday. Your affectionate husband, R. B.

Mr M'Diarmid of Dumfries communicated to Mr Lockhart an anecdote of Burns referable to this time. 'Rousseau, we all know, when dying, wished to be carried into the open air, that he might obtain a parting look of the glorious orb of day. A night or two before Burns left Brow, he drank tea with Mrs Craig, widow of the minister of Ruthwell. His altered appearance excited much silent sympathy; and the evening being beautiful, and the sun shining brightly through the casement, Miss Craig—now Mrs Henry Duncan<sup>1</sup>—was afraid the light might be too much for him, and rose with the view of letting down the window-blinds. Burns immediately guessed what she meant; and, regarding the young lady with a look of great benignity, said: "Thank you, my dear, for your kind attention; but oh, let him shine: he will not shine long for me!"'

<sup>1</sup> Mrs Duncan was the wife of the late highly estimable Dr Duncan, minister of Ruthwell, the originator of *savings-banks*, and the first describer of reptilian footsteps on the surfaces of ancient strata.

Before leaving Brow, Burns experienced a new attack of fever. According to Allan Cunningham, who was living in Dumfries at the time, the poet 'returned on the 18th, in a small spring-cart. The ascent to his house was steep, and the cart stopped at the foot of the Mill-hole-brae: when he alighted, he shook much, and stood with difficulty; he seemed unable to stand upright. He stooped as if in pain, and walked tottering towards his own door: his looks were hollow and ghastly, and those who saw him then expected never to see him in life again.' Dr Currie, who probably had exact information regarding the case from Maxwell, says: 'At this time a tremor pervaded his frame; his tongue was parched, and his mind sank into delirium when not roused by conversation.'

On returning to his home, he wrote what is supposed to be the last letter or composition of any kind peined by him. It was addressed to his father-in-law, and related to an expected domestic event which helped in no small degree to deepen the tragic character of the hour.

TO MR JAMES ARMOUR, MAUCHLINE.

DUMFRIES, 18th July 1796.

MY DEAR SIR—Do, for Heaven's sake, send Mrs Armour here immediately. My wife is hourly expecting to be put to bed. Good God! what a situation for her to be in, poor girl,<sup>1</sup> without a friend! I returned from sea-bathing quarters to-day, and my medical friends would almost persuade me that I am better; but I think and feel that my strength is so gone, that the disorder will prove fatal to me. Your son-in-law,

R. B.

The life of Burns was now to be measured by hours rather than days. To secure the quietness demanded at such a time, his four little boys were sent to the house of Mr Lewars. Jessy hovered by his couch with her usual assiduity. Findlater came occasionally to soothe the last moments of his friend. Early in the morning of the 21st, Burns had sunk into delirium, and it became evident that nature was well-nigh exhausted. The children were then sent for to see their parent for the last time in life. They stood round the bed, while calmly and gradually he sank into his last repose. The eldest son retained a distinct recollection of the scene, and has reported the sad fact, that the last words of the bard were a muttered execration against the legal agent by whose letter, wittingly or unwittingly, the parting days of Burns had been imbibited.

<sup>1</sup> Mrs Burns was not yet thirty years of age.

Though much of the conduct and conversation of Burns was matter of disapprobation with a portion of society in his own district, his death caused a general feeling of regret throughout Dumfries and its neighbourhood. By high and low, his genius had been admired. Many knew well the generous character of the man. All deplored the premature extinction of a spirit which, but a few years before, had shone out upon society with so bright a promise. They also sympathised with the young widow and her helpless children, now left without any provision for the future. In the general public, although the death of Burns was communicated through an authoritative channel in a manner disrespectful to his memory,<sup>1</sup> the same sentiments of regret and sympathy prevailed. The nation seemed to feel at its heart a pang of self-accusation for not having better appreciated and done more to foster a genius so extraordinary. It felt, and felt truly, that many a year might pass ere another equal to him should arise.

The funeral of Burns is well described by Dr Currie. ‘The Gentlemen Volunteers of Dumfries determined to bury their illustrious associate with military honours, and every preparation was made to render this last service solemn and impressive. The Fencible Infantry of Angusshire, and the regiment of cavalry of the Cinque Ports, at that time quartered in Dumfries,<sup>2</sup> offered their assistance on this occasion; the principal inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood determined to walk in the funeral procession; and a vast concourse of persons assembled, some of them from a considerable distance, to witness the obsequies of the

<sup>1</sup> The newspaper notice here adverted to must have been the production of some injudicious friend. ‘On the 21st inst., died at Dumfries, after a lingering illness, the celebrated ROBERT BURNS. His poetical compositions, distinguished equally by the force of native humour, by the warmth and the tenderness of passion, and by the glowing touches of a descriptive pencil—will remain a lasting monument of the vigour and versatility of a mind guided only by the Lights of Nature and the Inspirations of Genius. The public, to whose amusement he has so largely contributed, will hear with regret, that his extraordinary endowments were accompanied with frailties which rendered them useless to himself and his family. The last moments of his short life were spent in sickness and indigence; and his widow, with five infant children, and in hourly expectation of a sixth, is now left without any resource but what she may hope from the regard due to the memory of her husband.

‘The public are respectfully informed, that contributions for the wife and family of the late Robert Burns, who are left in circumstances of extreme distress, will be received at the houses of Sir William Forbes & Co., of Messrs Mansfield, Ramsay, & Co., and at the shops of the Edinburgh booksellers.

‘As it is proposed to publish, some time hence, a posthumous volume of the poetical remains of Robert Burns, for the benefit of the author’s family, his friends and acquaintances are requested to transmit such poems and letters as happen to be in their possession to Alexander Cunningham, writer, George’s Street, Edinburgh; or to John Syme, Esq., of Ryedale, Dumfries.’—*Edin. Advertiser*, July 26.

<sup>2</sup> The Cinque Ports Cavalry had arrived in Dumfries only a few days before the death of Burns. Among the junior officers was the Hon. Mr Jenkinson, afterwards Earl of Liverpool and prime minister of England.

Scottish bard. On the evening of the 25th of July, the remains of Burns were removed from his house to the Town Hall, and the funeral took place on the succeeding day.<sup>1</sup> A party of the Volunteers, selected to perform the military duty in the church-yard, stationed themselves in the front of the procession, with their arms reversed; the main body of the corps surrounded and supported the coffin, on which were placed the hat and sword of their friend and fellow-soldier; the numerous body of attendants ranged themselves in the rear; while the Fencible regiments of infantry and cavalry lined the streets from the Town Hall to the burial-ground in the southern church-yard, a distance of more than half a mile. The whole procession moved forward to that sublime and affecting strain of music, the Dead March in Saul; and three volleys fired over his grave marked the return of Burns to his parent earth! The spectacle was in a high degree grand and solemn, and accorded with the general sentiments of sympathy and sorrow which the occasion had called forth.'

Dr Currie adds: 'It was an affecting circumstance, that on the morning of the day of her husband's funeral, Mrs Burns was undergoing the pains of labour, and that, during the solemn service we have just been describing, the posthumous son of our poet was born.' This child was named Maxwell, in honour of Dr Maxwell, the physician who had attended Burns on his death-bed. He died in infancy.

As Dr Currie's description of Burns was composed under advantages which no subsequent writer can enjoy, and is an elegant piece of writing, I am induced to transfer it to these pages.

'Burns was nearly five feet ten inches in height, and of a form that indicated agility as well as strength. His well-raised forehead, shaded with black curling hair, indicated extensive capacity. His eyes were large, dark, full of ardour and intelligence. His face was well formed; and his countenance uncommonly interesting and expressive. His mode of dressing, which was often slovenly, and a certain fulness and bend in his shoulders, characteristic of his original profession, disguised in some degree the natural symmetry and elegance of his form. The external appearance of Burns was most strikingly indicative of the character of his mind. On a first view, his physiognomy had a certain air of coarseness, mingled, however, with an expression of deep penetration, and of calm thoughtfulness, approaching to melancholy. There appeared in his

<sup>1</sup> The *Edinburgh Advertiser* of Friday the 29th contains a paragraph, dated 'Dumfries, 26th July,' which says that 'the remains of Burns were interred on Monday, with military honours and every suitable respect.' Monday was the 25th, and this undoubtedly was the day of the funeral.

first manner and address, perfect ease and self-possession, but a stern and almost supercilious elevation, not, indeed, incompatible with openness and affability, which, however, bespoke a mind conscious of superior talents. Strangers that supposed themselves approaching an Ayrshire peasant who could make rhymes, and to whom their notice was an honour, found themselves speedily overawed by the presence of a man who bore himself with dignity, and who possessed a singular power of correcting forwardness and of repelling intrusion.<sup>1</sup> But though jealous of the respect due to himself, Burns never enforced it where he saw it was willingly paid; and though inaccessible to the approaches of pride, he was open to every advance of kindness and of benevolence. His dark and haughty countenance easily relaxed into a look of good-will, of pity, or of tenderness; and as the various emotions succeeded each other in his mind, assumed with equal ease the expression of the broadest humour, of the most extravagant mirth, of the deepest melancholy, or of the most sublime emotion. The tones of his voice happily corresponded with the expression of his features, and with the feelings of his mind. When to these endowments are added a rapid and distinct apprehension, a most powerful understanding, and a happy command of language—of strength as well as brilliancy of expression—we shall be able to account for the extraordinary attractions of his conversation—for the sorcery which, in his social parties, he seemed to exert on all around him. In the company of women, this sorcery was more especially apparent. Their presence charmed the fiend of melancholy in his bosom, and awoke his happiest feelings; it excited the powers of his fancy, as well as the tenderness of his heart; and by restraining the vehemence and the exuberance of his language, at times gave to his manners the impression of taste, and even of elegance, which in the company of men they seldom possessed. This influence was doubtless reciprocal. A Scottish lady accustomed to the best society, declared with characteristic *naïveté*, that no man's conversation ever *carried her*

<sup>1</sup> ‘During his residence in Glasgow, a characteristic instance occurred of the way in which he would repress petulance and presumption. A young man of some literary pretensions, who had newly commenced business as a bookseller, had been in the practice of writing notices of Burns’s poems in a style so flippant, and withal so patronising, as to excite feelings in the poet towards him very different from what he counted upon. Reckoning, however, upon a very grateful reception from Burns, he was particularly anxious for an early introduction to his company; and, as his friends knew, had been at some pains to prepare himself for making a dazzling impression upon the Ayrshire ploughman, as it was then the fashion, amongst a certain kind of literary folks, to call the poet. At the moment the introduction took place, Burns was engaged in one of his happiest and most playful veins with my friend and another intimate or two; but upon the gentleman’s presentation, who advanced in a manner sufficiently affable, the “ploughman” assumed an air of such dignified coldness, as froze him into complete silence during the time he remained in his company.’—*Correspondent of the Scotsman*, 1828.

*so completely off her feet*, as that of Burns;<sup>1</sup> and an English lady, familiarly acquainted with several of the most distinguished characters of the present times, assured the editor, that in the happiest of his social hours, there was a charm about Burns which she had never seen equalled.<sup>2</sup> This charm arose not more from the power than the versatility of his genius. No languor could be felt in the society of a man who passed at pleasure from *grave to gay*, from the ludicrous to the pathetic, from the simple to the sublime; who wielded all his faculties with equal strength and ease, and never failed to impress the offspring of his fancy with the stamp of his understanding.

'This, indeed, is to represent Burns in his happiest phasis. In large and mixed parties, he was often silent and dark, sometimes fierce and overbearing; he was jealous of the proud man's scorn, jealous to an extreme of the insolence of wealth, and prone to avenge, even on its innocent possessor, the partiality of fortune. By nature, kind, brave, sincere, and in a singular degree compassionate, he was on the other hand proud, irascible, and vindictive. His virtues and his failings had their origin in the extraordinary sensibility of his mind, and equally partook of the chills and glows of sentiment. His friendships were liable to interruption from jealousy or disgust, and his enmities died away under the influence of pity or self-accusation. His understanding was equal to the other powers of his mind, and his deliberate opinions were singularly candid and just; but, like other men of great and irregular genius, the opinions which he delivered in conversation were often the offspring of temporary feelings, and widely different from the calm decisions of his judgment. This was not merely true respecting the characters of others, but in regard to some of the most important points of human speculation.'

Little more than a fortnight after the death of Burns, Mrs Walter Riddel presented anonymously in the *Dumfries Journal* a view of his personal qualities, designed to counteract the effects of the misrepresentation and calumny which had already begun to circulate regarding him. The notice is even more creditable to the heart than to the intellect of the lady, for, before writing it, she had to forgive all those unhappy lampoons which, under temporary irritation, Burns had launched against her and her husband. We must consider the whole conduct of this lady respecting Burns as a solid testimony in his favour. He had sinned against her, as against much that was more sacred than

<sup>1</sup> It has been stated that this lady was Jane, Duchess of Gordon.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs Walter Riddel is here meant.

she; but she, nevertheless, acknowledged his many merits and excellences, and found in him no offences which a pure mind might not regard with leniency. The late Mr Alexander Smellie, son of the rough old naturalist already introduced to the reader, had visited Mrs Riddel a few months before Burns's death, when he found her talking of him in terms of opprobrium, only perhaps too well justified by his conduct towards herself. He revisited her immediately after the death of the poet, and found that all offence had been lost in admiration and regret. Attended by her young friend, the enthusiastic lady went that night at a late hour to St Michael's Church-yard, and planted laurels over the poet's new-made grave.

Mrs Riddel opens with an assertion which must have been startling to the public of that day, who had not yet learned to contemplate Burns as anything beyond a prodigy of versifying power. She says: 'The fact is, that poetry (I appeal to all who have had the advantage of being personally acquainted with him) was actually not his *forte*. Many others, perhaps, may have ascended to prouder heights in the region of Parnassus, but none certainly ever outshone Burns in the charms, the sorcery, I would almost call it, of fascinating conversation, the spontaneous eloquence of social argument, or the unstudied poignancy of brilliant repartee; nor was any man, I believe, ever gifted with a larger portion of the *vivida vis animi*. His personal endowments were perfectly correspondent to the qualifications of his mind—his form was manly—his action, energy itself—devoid in a great measure perhaps of those graces, of that polish, acquired only in the refinement of societies where in early life he could have no opportunities of mixing; but where, such was the irresistible power of attraction that encircled him, though his appearance and manners were always peculiar, he never failed to delight and to excel. His figure seemed to bear testimony to his earlier destination and employments. It seemed rather moulded by nature for the rough exercises of agriculture, than the gentler cultivation of the belles-lettres. His features were stamped with the hardy character of independence, and the firmness of conscious, though not arrogant, pre-eminence; the animated expressions of countenance were almost peculiar to himself; the rapid lightnings of his eye were always the harbingers of some flash of genius, whether they darted the fiery glances of insulted and indignant superiority, or beamed with the impassioned sentiment of fervent and impetuous affections. His voice alone could improve upon the magic of his eye: sonorous, replete with the finest modulations, it alternately captivated the ear with the melody of poetic numbers, the perspicuity of nervous reasoning, or the ardent

sallies of enthusiastic patriotism. The keenness of satire was, I am almost at a loss whether to say his *forte* or his foible; for though nature had endowed him with a portion of the most pointed excellence in that dangerous talent, he suffered it too often to be the vehicle of personal, and sometimes unfounded, animosities. It was not always that sportiveness of humour, that "unwary pleasantry," which Sterne has depicted with touches so conciliatory, but the darts of ridicule were frequently directed as the caprice of the instant suggested, or as the altercations of parties and of persons happened to kindle the restlessness of his spirit into interest or aversion. This, however, was not invariably the case; his wit (which is no unusual matter indeed) had always the start of his judgment, and would lead him to the indulgence of raillery uniformly acute, but often unaccompanied with the least desire to wound. The suppression of an arch and full-pointed *bon-mot*, from a dread of offending its object, the sage of Zurich very properly classes as a virtue *only to be sought for in the calendar of saints*; if so, Burns must not be too severely dealt with for being rather deficient in it. He paid for his mischievous wit as dearly as any one could do. " 'Twas no extravagant arithmetic," to say of him, as was said of Yorick, that "for every ten jokes he got a hundred enemies," but much allowance will be made by a candid mind for the splenetic warmth of a spirit whom "distress had spited with the world," and which, unbounded in its intellectual sallies and pursuits, continually experienced the curbs imposed by the waywardness of his fortune. The vivacity of his wishes and temper was indeed checked by almost habitual disappointments, which sat heavy on a heart that acknowledged the ruling passion of independence, without having ever been placed beyond the grasp of penury. His soul was never languid or inactive, and his genius was extinguished only with the last spark of retreating life. His passions rendered him, according as they disclosed themselves in affection or antipathy, an object of enthusiastic attachment, or of decided enmity; for he possessed none of that negative insipidity of character, whose love might be regarded with indifference, or whose resentment could be considered with contempt. In this, it should seem, the temper of his associates took the tincture from his own; for he acknowledged in the universe but two classes of objects—those of adoration the most fervent, or of aversion the most uncontrollable; and it has been frequently a reproach to him, that, unsusceptible of indifference, often hating where he ought only to have despised, he alternately opened his heart and poured forth the treasures of his understanding to such as were incapable of appreciating the homage, and elevated to the privileges of an adversary some who

were unqualified in all respects for the honour of a contest so distinguished.

' It is said that the celebrated Dr Johnson professed to " love a good hater"—a temperament that would have singularly adapted him to cherish a prepossession in favour of our bard, who perhaps fell but little short even of the surly doctor in this qualification, as long as the disposition to ill-will continued; but the warmth of his passions was fortunately corrected by their versatility. He was seldom, indeed never, implacable in his resentments, and sometimes, it has been alleged, not inviolably faithful in his engagements of friendship. Much, indeed, has been said about his inconstancy and caprice; but I am inclined to believe, that they originated less in a levity of sentiment, than from an extreme impetuosity of feeling, which rendered him prompt to take umbrage; and his sensations of pique, where he fancied he had discovered the traces of neglect, scorn, or unkindness, took their measure of asperity from the overflowings of the opposite sentiment which preceded them, and which seldom failed to regain its ascendancy in his bosom on the return of calmer reflection. He was candid and manly in the avowal of his errors, and *his avowal* was a *reparation*. His native *fierté* never forsaking him for a moment, the value of a frank acknowledgment was enhanced ten-fold towards a generous mind, from its never being attended with servility. His mind, organised only for the stronger and more acute operations of the passions, was impracticable to the efforts of superciliousness that would have depressed it into humility, and equally superior to the encroachments of venal suggestions that might have led him into the mazes of hypocrisy. . . . .

' That Burns had received no classical education, and was acquainted with the Greek and Roman authors only through the medium of translations, is a fact of which all who were in the habit of conversing with him might readily be convinced. I have, indeed, seldom observed him to be at a loss in conversation, unless where the dead languages and their writers have been the subjects of discussion. When I have pressed him to tell me why he never applied himself to acquire the Latin, in particular, a language which his happy memory would have so soon enabled him to be master of, he used only to reply with a smile, that he had already learnt all the Latin he desired to know, and that was *omnia vincit amor*—a sentence, that from his writings and most favourite pursuits, it should undoubtedly seem that he was most thoroughly versed in; but I really believe his classic erudition extended little if any further.'

Mrs Riddel acknowledged the imputed irregularities of Burns, but pled that 'the eccentric intuitions of genius too often yield

the soul to the wild effervescence of desires, always unbounded, and sometimes equally dangerous to the repose of others as dangerous to its own. . . . . I trust,' she says in conclusion, 'that honest fame will be permanently affixed to Burns's character, which I think it will be found he *has* merited by the candid and impartial among his countrymen. And where a recollection of the imprudences that sullied his brighter qualifications interposes, let the imperfection of all human excellence be remembered at the same time, leaving those inconsistencies, which alternately exalted his nature into the seraph and sank it again into the man, to the tribunal which *alone* can investigate the labyrinths of the human heart—

"Where they alike in trembling hope *repose*—  
The bosom of his father and his *God*."<sup>1</sup>

Mrs Riddel's prediction has certainly been verified, for an honest fame, and something more, does now attach to the memory of Robert Burns. It is many years since any open attempt has been made to vilify the peasant bard on any account whatever, and it is abundantly clear, that no such attempt will ever again be made by any man who wishes to stand well with the Scottish public; for whatever sectarian views may sway, or whatever prudish feelings intrude, no man amongst us can endure that the shadow of the fame of Burns, personal or literary, should ever be made less. The danger is now, indeed, not that Burns may be under-estimated or calumniated, but that the affection in which his memory is held, may interfere with even the most friendly attempts to set forth the lights and shadows of his character with historic fidelity.

On a narrow and critical examination of the life and conduct of our great poet, and thus getting quit of the almost mythic gloss which already invests it, we do not find either that garreteer-like poverty which is usually associated with his name, or that tendency to excessive or wild irregularity which has been imputed to him. Burns was cut short by an accidental disease in the midst of a life, humble indeed compared with his deserts, but one attended with no essential privations, not to any serious extent distressing to his spirit, and not unhopeful. A very short time before his death, he is found looking cheerfully forward to promotion in the branch of public service to which he had attached himself; and it may be added, if he had lived a few years longer, and attained the expected promotion, his situation would have been one far from despicable. In his official conduct, Burns, it fully appears,

<sup>1</sup> Mrs Walter Riddel gave material assistance to Dr Currie in his task as biographer and editor of Burns.

displayed diligence and accuracy. He behaved himself much more like a man of the world than is generally supposed. The charges against him on the score of intemperance have been proved to be greatly exaggerated. He was only the occasional boon-companion, never the dram-drinker or the sot; and his aberrations in this line were those of the age, not his own. There remains, indeed, one serious frailty at the charge of Burns. It has been spoken of here with candour, lest, in the event of its being slurred over, an exaggerated idea of it should be entertained. It certainly was much to be deplored; and yet we must see that it was connected and inwrought with the peculiar poetical power which he possessed, a power of which, apparently, we should not have had the benefits on cheaper terms.<sup>1</sup> We may pronounce, therefore, against the sin, and deplore the humiliation into which it brought so noble a genius; but we must at the same time remember, that the light which led astray was in him truly ‘a light from heaven.’ If Burns had lived ten years longer, we should have seen him surmounting the turbid wave of passion, and atoning for many of his errors. Let us give him the benefit of this ideal amendment.

There, after all, was a defect in Burns which no number of years would have ever enabled him to remedy, and this was his want of a vigorous will. Thomas Carlyle, after writing most generously of Burns, has been carried so far in his ardent admiration as to say, that no other man was so well entitled to be at the head of the public affairs of his day, as if his being so peculiarly a man of talent fitted him above all rivalry for that eminent situation. There could not be a greater mistake, for how could

<sup>1</sup> ——— ‘by his own hand—in words the import of which cannot be mistaken—it has been recorded that the order of his life but faintly corresponded with the clearness of his views. It is probable that he could have proved a still greater poet if, by strength of reason, he could have controlled the propensities which his sensibilities engendered; but he would have been a poet of a different class: and, certain it is, had that desirable restraint been early established, many peculiar beauties which enrich his verse would never have existed, and many accessory influences which contribute greatly to their effect would have been wanting. For instance, the momentous truth of the passage, “One point must still be greatly dark,” &c., could not have possibly been conveyed with such pathetic force by any poet that ever lived, speaking in his own voice; unless it were felt that, like Burns, he was a man who preached from the text of his own errors; and whose wisdom, beautiful as a flower that might have risen from seed sown from above, was in fact a scion from the root of personal suffering. Whom did the poet intend should be thought of occupying that grave over which, after modestly setting forth the moral discernment and warm affections of its “poor inhabitant below,” it is supposed to be inscribed that—

———— “Thoughtless follies laid him low,  
And stained his name.”

Who but himself—himself anticipating the too probable termination of his own course? Here is a sincere and solemn avowal—a public declaration *from his own will*—a confession at once devout, poetical, and human—a history in the shape of a prophecy!—WORDSWORTH.

a man, who was unable to exercise a control upon his own passions in the simplest things, have ever been able to exercise the control upon himself and others which is necessary in the great statesman? The general abilities of Burns were no doubt extraordinary; but it is perfectly clear, that the poetical temperament ruled in his nature. He was impressionable, irritable, capricious. Whatever he did that was brilliant, he did under impulse. He only reflected when it was too late. Minds like his have their own mission; but it is not to sway great democracies. It is to touch the souls of men with their fine sensibilities, and give an imperishable voice to the subtlest emotions of their bosoms. In studying such minds, we are not to expect calm and regulated movement, as of some machine perfect in all its parts, and which has certain definite purposes to serve. It is not of that active character at all. We are rather to look for some passive thing like the *Æolian* harp, which has a hundred moods in an hour. Such, truly, is the Poet; and it must ever be a fearful problem, how such a being is to stand towards the rest of society, how he is to get his living, and how he is to observe one-half of the sober maxims of conventional life.

As a poet, Burns is not of course to be ranked with any of the higher denominations. He competes not with the Homers or the Miltos; scarcely even with the Drydens or Popes. But he stands in a very noble rank by himself, as one who treated with unapproached felicity all the sensuous familiar things which lay around him in the world. It may be said, that he is happy in the treating of these things in a great measure by reason of his singular command of language. Whatever idea was within him, there was a channel of expression for it, by which it came out in full and true lineaments, and without a single sacrifice to rant, or trick, or the exigencies of verse. The possession of this language-power, Horatian as it was, would have never of itself made a great poet; but it, and the fruitful mind together, conferred an advantage which there was no resisting. When we seek to ascertain what it is in the thoughts and feelings of Burns which pleases us so much, we find that it mainly is their unaffected simplicity and *naïveté*. He was the true man before he was the true poet. To be so entirely free of a tedious literalness, he is the most faithful of painters. The emotions of a liberal genial nature flow from him, and we all feel that it is a voice which admirably represents his kind. There is never any pause for an expletive ornament. Art is completely concealed in his case, simply because he wrote the ideas as they naturally rose and came, and not with any secondary view to effect. Thus he is the least egotistic of poets, for even where he worships some female divinity of his own, he does it in the words which all would

feel to be suitable in the like circumstances. It is alike in humour and in the serious or sentimental. Never does Burns fail to be true, simple, and direct, and rarely, accordingly, do his verses fail to paint themselves upon the imagination of the reader. I must, after all, hesitate about the place which ought to be assigned to him among the British poets. Since his own day, he has advanced immensely in consideration ; and perhaps he is only now as Shakspeare was in the time of Dryden and Rowe. What the British opinion may ultimately decide about one who drew so faithfully ard sang so sweetly, it might be rash to vaticinate.

## POSTHUMOUS HISTORY OF BURNS.

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BURNS died, not exactly in pressing indigence or privation, but without possessing any such amount of property as could place his widow and children above more than immediate want. It is not, everything considered, so wonderful that he left his family in these circumstances, as that he died free of debt except to a comparatively trifling amount.<sup>1</sup> This is indeed a fact highly remarkable, and one which reflects a peculiar lustre upon the name of Burns. The money realised by his poems appears to have been expended by the time he left Ellisland: he obtained no more that we are aware of from that source, excepting the small sum thrust upon him by Mr Thomson. He had lived four and a half years in Dumfries, with an ascertained income which 'was for some time as low as L.50, and never rose above L.70 a year,'<sup>2</sup> with a

<sup>1</sup> It has been repeatedly stated in so many words, that Burns died free of debt. This, even by his own confession (letter to his brother, July 10, 1796), is not strictly true. Besides the amount of the unfortunate account which had been presented at so unsuiting a time, he had small accounts due to other tradesmen. The poet would also appear to have never quite succeeded in squaring accounts with his landlord, Captain Hamilton. The interest of his countrymen about every authentic particular respecting Burns, seems to give these small matters a title to be noticed. I deem it probable, after all, that the total amount of our poet's debts did not much exceed thirty pounds. The following letter from Gilbert Burns to Mr Wallace, writer in Dumfries, throws some light on the subject, while still further confirming the fact, that Mr James Clarke, the schoolmaster, was a debtor of Burns:

MOSSGIEL, 1st Jan. 1797.

MR WALLACE—Sir, I intended to have been in Dumfries about this time, to have paid off my brother's debts; but I find much difficulty in sparing as much money. I think of offering Captain Hamilton and Mr Williamson the half of their accts, and begging a little time to pay the other half. If Mr Clark pay up his bill, I hope to be able to pay off the smaller accts. I beg you will write me your opinion immediately on this subject. Will you have the goodness to mention this to them, which will save me some uneasiness when I come to Dumfries, which I think will be in two or three weeks, unless I have occasion to delay it till Dumfries fair? I beg that you will smooth the way to me in this business as much as you can. I do feel much hurt at it; but, as I suppose the delay can be no great inconvenience to the gentlemen, I hope they will be indulgent to me. I am, sir, your most obedt humble ser<sup>t</sup>

GILBERT BURNS.

<sup>2</sup> Currie.

family of seven or eight individuals to support, and this at a time when the necessaries of life were considerably dearer than they usually are now; and yet he had exercised so much prudence and self-denial, that only a few pounds stood at his debit when he died. On the other side of the account, we find the £.180 which he had advanced from the profits of his poems to his brother, books to the value of about £.90, and his household furniture. The draft for £.10 sent by Mr Burnes, and that for £.5 sent by Mr Thomson, lay unrealised in the widow's possession, and formed the subject of a legal writ issued by the Commissary of Dumfries on the ensuing 6th of October, confirming to her, '*executrix qua relict to the umquahile Robert Burns,*' the use of the sums which they represented.

While Burns lay dead in his house, his friend Mr Lewars addressed a letter to Mr Burnes of Montrose, informing him of the melancholy event, and apologising for the delay of an answer to his late kind communication, on the ground that, at the time it was received, 'Mr Burns was totally unable either to write or dictate a letter.' It is pleasing to mention, as a trait honourable to the family to which the poet belonged, that Mr Burnes immediately sent a letter of the kindest condolence to the widow, offering to do anything in his power to alleviate her affliction. This, be it remembered, was not a rich man, and he had a family of his own to provide for; yet, apparently as a simple matter of course, he offered to relieve the widow of the charge of her eldest son, and to educate him with his own children: he also enclosed an additional sum of £.5, to relieve her immediate necessities. Adverting, moreover, to what the poet had told him of his brother Gilbert's debt, he counselled, as the payment would be hard upon that respectable man, that she should, as far as circumstances permitted, 'use lenity in settling with him.' Mrs Burns replied in suitable terms of gratitude to Mr Burnes, but declined, in the meantime, to part with any of her children: she heartily concurred in the feeling which dictated his allusion to Gilbert. It may here be added, that this excellent man, who had long struggled under great difficulties at Mossgiel, made up his mind at his brother's death to sell off all he possessed, in order to obtain the means of discharging the debt he owed to the destitute Dumfries family. It is most pleasing to record, that Mrs Robert Burns, setting aside all regard to her own necessities, resolutely forbade the proposed step being taken. The debt was not paid till twenty-four years after, and it seems to have then been paid without interest; but during the whole time of its currency, Gilbert had maintained his mother, a burden with which the poet in life would have been partly chargeable, and he had also taken charge of the poet's eldest son

for several years. Poverty, it must be admitted, has its immediate evils; but when it gives occasion, as in the instances now under our attention, to generous self-sacrifice amongst those connected by the ties of blood, it appears, in contrast with the sordid emotions too often excited by world's wealth, a blessing, and this not merely to those who well sustain its pressure, but to all who have hearts to be touched and spirits to be chastened by the noble examples it sets before them.

Immediately after the death of Burns, his friend Syme began to exert himself with the greatest zeal and assiduity in rousing public feeling in behalf of the widow and children. With him was associated in his task Dr William Maxwell, the medical attendant of the poet—a man of somewhat singular character and attainments. The popular report regarding him was, that, having been at the medical schools of Paris in the heat of the Revolution, he had contracted democratic sentiments; had acted as one of the national guard round the scaffold of Louis XVI., and dipped his handkerchief in the royal blood. Recently returned to his own country, he had commenced practice in Dumfries, but was as yet only laying the foundations of that high professional character which he subsequently perfected. He had attended Burns in his last illness, and participated strongly in the interest occasioned by his premature death. He accordingly entered at once, and with the greatest cordiality, into the project for the benefit of the poet's family. To Syme and him was immediately added Mr Alexander Cunningham, the bard's principal Edinburgh friend, and one not less eager to do whatever was in his power in a cause so dear to charity. From some one of these three men had, in all probability, proceeded the newspaper announcement which has been quoted. It contains a passage which could never have been allowed to be published, if Burns had left a grown-up instead of an infant family; but it also presents a gratifying proof of the activity of the men in the benevolent object which they sought to advance.

Syme had an old college friend in practice as a physician at Liverpool, a man of excellent literary talents, whom an affinity of tastes had brought into intimacy with Mr William Roscoe, of that town. The person meant was Dr James Currie, who has since been so well known as the biographer and editor of Burns, but who at this time enjoyed only a dubious fame, as the supposed author of *Jasper Wilson's Letter to Mr Pitt*, a pamphlet in which the war had been deprecated with a power of reasoning far from pleasing to the administration. Currie, who was the son of a Scotch clergyman, and a native of Dumfriesshire, had read Burns's poems on their first appearance with the keenest relish

of their beauties; and he had received, from a casual interview with the poet at Dumfries in 1792, the impression that he was a man of marvellous general talents as well as a charming Doric poet. On now hearing of the death of Burns, he expressed to Syme a strong interest in the intended subscription, and also in the preparation of the life and posthumous works of the poet. Before a month had elapsed from the poet's death, we find that he had collected forty or fifty guineas for the family. He was at the same time writing about the proposed publication, in such terms as amounted to an offer of his own literary assistance to any extent that might be desired. For some time, there seems to have been an uncertainty as to the selection of an editor and biographer for Burns. Professor Stewart was the first person thought of. Another was Mrs Walter Riddel. Dr Currie thought so well of Syme's talents, as to press the undertaking upon him. But it was finally settled, in September, and very fortunately so, that this duty should devolve upon Dr Currie.

Meanwhile, the subscription went on, but not flourishingly. In Dumfriesshire, somewhat more than L.100 had been contributed within the first three months. In Liverpool, Dr Currie gathered seventy guineas. Let it not be too surprising that the contribution from Edinburgh had not, by the end of the year, gone much beyond the latter sum, though Burns had there had many admirers and not a few friends. Every one who has had aught to do with the collection of subscriptions for charitable objects, must know how little will come spontaneously from even those circles where the purpose of the collection is presumed to be most cordially contemplated, and how many who might be expected to give liberally give nothing. Accidental opportunities here and there determine the result. It does not appear that any efforts were made in Scotland beyond the publication of advertisements in the newspapers. In London, there was greater success, and the entire sum realised was L.700.<sup>1</sup> For the support of the widow and her five boys, this was evidently inadequate; but it was hoped that the posthumous publication would realise such an addition, as might make a tolerable provision in a style not inferior to that in which the family had previously lived.

In the collection of Burns's letters and fugitive poems, Mr Syme was laudably diligent during the latter part of 1796, and considerable success attended his efforts. The letters to Mrs Dunlop were recovered, on the condition of hers to Burns being returned to herself. Those to Clarinda remained with herself, as unsuitable for the public, excepting a few passages, which she promised to

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, No. 14.

transcribe and send, provided that her own were returned.<sup>1</sup> Mr Robert Aiken had gathered together many of the bard's communications; but the bundle was stolen by an unfaithful clerk, and, it is feared, destroyed, to prevent detection. The mass collected by Syme was transmitted to Dr Currie in February 1797, and excited great surprise from its utter want of arrangement. 'I received,' says Currie, 'the complete sweepings of his drawers and of his desk—as it appeared to me—even to the copy-book on which his little boy had been practising his writing.' It may partly account for the confusion, that Syme spoke a month earlier to Mrs M'Lehose of being worn out with duty, and having to write occasionally twenty letters a day. Currie relates, that he read these papers 'with sympathy, with sorrow, with pity, and with admiration; and at times, with strong though transient disgust.'

Dr Currie, after having the heart-secrets of Burns exposed to him, spoke on the subject as might be expected of a sensible, kind-natured man. He said: 'The errors and faults, as well as the excellences, of Burns's life and character, afford scope for painful and melancholy observation. This part of the subject must be touched with great tenderness; but it must be touched. If his friends do not touch it, his enemies will. To speak my mind to you freely, it appears to me that his misfortunes arose chiefly from his errors. This it is unnecessary, and indeed improper, to say; but his biographer must keep it in mind, to prevent him from running into those bitter invectives against Scotland, &c. which the extraordinary attractions and melancholy fate of the poet naturally provoke. Six Liverpool poets have sung the requiem of our admired bard; and every one of them has indulged in the most pointed, and in some degree unjust, invectives against the country and the society in which he lived.'

An important part of the unpublished writings of Burns consisted in the songs, upwards of sixty in number, which he had written for the work of Mr George Thomson. Of these, only six had as yet been published, for one *part* or half-volume of Mr

<sup>1</sup> I have been favoured with an extract from a letter of Mrs M'Lehose to Mr Syme, written at this time:

'What can have impressed such an idea upon you, as that I ever conceived the most distant intention to destroy these precious memorials of an acquaintance, the recollection of which would influence me were I to live till fourscore. Be assured, I never will suffer one of them to perish. This I give you my solemn word of honour upon; nay, more, on condition that you send me my letters, I will select such passages from our dear Bard's letters as will do honour to his memory, and cannot hurt my own fame even with the most rigid.'

In another letter of the 9th January 1797, to the same gentleman, she says: 'It rejoices me to hear so large a sum is to come from other places—and [I] join you in reprobating Caledonia's capital for her shabby donation. But there are few souls anywhere who understood or could enter into the relish of such a character as B.'s. There was an electricity about him, which could only touch or pervade a few, cast in nature's finest mould.'

Thomson's work had alone appeared. Burns had conferred on Mr Thomson the copyright of these songs, as securing that gentleman against their being used in any rival publication. Of course, when a posthumous collection of the poet's writings was designed for the benefit of his destitute family, Mr Thomson at once gave up the songs. As he could not be said to have paid a pecuniary equivalent for them, this conduct was no more than just; but Mr Thomson did all besides which was to be expected from a man superior to sordid considerations. In order that the songs might come out fresh in the posthumous collection, and thus serve the family as far as possible, he interrupted, or at least retarded, the progress of his own work for some considerable time. He at first demurred to the surrender of the valuable series of letters which Burns had addressed to him regarding Scottish songs; but this point was speedily yielded to the earnest request of the trustees of the poet's family. He was also induced to permit his own letters to appear in connection with those of Burns, thus perfecting a section of the projected work which Currie justly considered as the most valuable. After remarking to his publishers, that 'the letters of Mr Thomson are themselves very good,' the learned biographer says: 'His conduct in giving up this treasure to the family is deserving of every praise.'<sup>1</sup> Such was the sense of it entertained by both the widow and brother of the bard, and such afterwards proved to be the feeling of the children of Burns. By the whole family, Mr Thomson has ever been regarded as one who had acted in a most honourable manner towards them.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Correspondence of Dr Currie with Messrs Cadell & Davies, manuscript in possession of Joseph Mayer, Esq. Liverpool.

<sup>2</sup> Mr Thomson's elegant work extended to five volumes, of which an octavo edition was subsequently published, and after a long interval, he added a sixth volume in 1841, the work having thus occupied in its preparation and publication not much less than half a century. The editor was a man of singularly amiable character and cheerful manners. A hitherto inedited letter of Mr Gilbert Burns, addressed to him on receiving the present of a volume of his collection of songs, proves that the statement in the text is not exaggerated.

TO MR GEORGE THOMSON, TRUSTEES' OFFICE, EDINBURGH.

DINNING, 14th March 1800.

SIR—I received your very acceptable present of your songs, which calls for my warmest thanks. If ever I come to Edinburgh, I will certainly avail myself of your invitation, to call on a person whose handsome conduct to my brother's family has secured my esteem, and confirmed to me the opinion, that musical taste and talents have a close connection with the harmony of the moral feelings. I am unwilling indeed to believe that the motions of every one's heart are dark as Erebus to whom Dame Nature has denied a good ear and musical capacity, as her ladyship has been pleased to endow myself but scantily in these particulars; but 'happy the swain who possesses it, happy his cot, and happy the sharer of it.' To the sharer of yours, I beg you will present my most cordial congratulations. My sister-in-law begs me to present her best thanks to you for her copy, and to assure you that,

Another section of Burns's writings consisted in the songs he had contributed to *Johnson's Scots Musical Museum*. The number sent in his handwriting has been stated at 180; but many of these were old songs, gathered by him from oral tradition; many had only received from him a few improving touches; and only forty-seven were finally decided upon by Dr Currie as wholly and undoubtedly the production of Burns. The poet himself, though the voluminousness of Johnson's collection seems to have disposed him to regard it as 'the text-book and standard of Scottish song and music,' felt ashamed of much that he had contributed to it. 'Here, once for all,' said he in a letter to Mr Thomson, 'let me apologise for the many silly compositions of mine in this work. Many beautiful airs wanted words, and in the hurry of other avocations, if I could string a parcel of rhymes together, anything near tolerable, I was fain to let them pass.' On the other hand, a considerable number of his contributions to Johnson were equal to the best of his compositions, and had already attained popularity.

The memoir of Dr Currie by his son contains an ample account of the difficulties experienced by that gentleman in arranging the papers and composing the life of Burns. The only material assistance he seems to have obtained, was from Mr Syme and Gilbert Burns during a fortnight which they spent with him at Liverpool in the autumn of 1797. 'It was determined that the work should be published by subscription; and Dr Currie, in addition to that part for which he was more particularly responsible, undertook to make the necessary arrangements with the booksellers and printer, and to superintend the publication. A negotiation was soon afterwards concluded by him with the London publishers (Messrs Cadell & Davies), who behaved with a liberality very honourable to their character—at once

however little she may have expressed it, she has a proper sense of the kind attention you have so kindly shewn her.—I am, dear sir, with the highest esteem, your  
most obedient, humble servant,

GILBERT BURNS.

Mr Thomson retired from the principal clerkship of the Trustees' Office in 1839, after having filled it for fifty-eight years. He died in February 1851, aged 94. On the 3d of March 1847, a silver vase, purchased by one hundred gentlemen of Edinburgh, was presented to Mr Thomson, as a mark of their respect and esteem. On that occasion, Lord Cockburn spoke of 'the protracted life which had been devoted, in one course of unchanging gentleness, to public and private duty.' In his official capacity, 'in everything that related to the advancement of the useful and the elegant arts, he was an instructor and a guide; and if there was a single young man who had the promise of merit united with a humble disposition, it was to Mr Thomson he looked for counsel, and it was his house that was always ready to receive him.' As to the imputations in connection with the history of Burns, his lordship said, that he had long ago studied the matter with as much candour as any man could apply to any subject in which he was not personally interested; and his 'clear conviction was, not only that all these imputations were groundless, but that, if placed now in the same situation in which he was then, nothing different or better could be done.'

agreeing to take upon themselves the risk of the promised or expected subscriptions to the intended volumes, and also to relieve the widow and family from all anxiety or further trouble attending their publication. To those persons who were not eye-witnesses, it would be difficult to convey an idea how much Dr Currie's labours were increased by the necessity of attention to all these details. Indeed, he found himself embarked in an undertaking which consumed much valuable time, that would have been otherwise employed on subjects connected with his profession.<sup>1</sup> He was sustained through all these troubles and exertions by his benevolent feelings. 'I trust,' he says to Cadell and Davies (February 1798), 'that by our co-operation we shall lift this family from the ground, and give the five infant sons a chance in the world which their poor father never had.'

In a subsequent letter to the same individuals, Dr Currie says: 'In tracing the life of this singular genius, it is most curious and interesting to observe the incidents which gave rise to the effusions of his muse. Every one of his poems, printed and unprinted, has a history attending it, which, while it illustrates the character of the poet, illustrates also the manners and character of the class of men to which he belonged. In giving his biography, therefore, it would be very desirable to have the liberty of introducing such of his poems as relate to the incidents recorded, in their proper places, as well as to introduce occasionally his letters to his friends and his own private observations from his imperfect diaries. In this way, his journey through the classical ground in the south of Scotland, as well as his tour through the Highlands, including his visits to the Dukes of Athole and Gordon, may be made out clearly and very amusingly.' The biographer here sketches out the plan which has been for the first time fully followed out in the work now before the reader. The degree in which Dr Currie acted upon it was much more limited.

*The Works of Robert Burns, with an Account of his Life, and a Criticism on his Writings, by James Currie, M.D.* appeared in May 1800, in four volumes 8vo. The publication was received with the greatest approbation by the public. It was admitted that the biography was executed with surprising delicacy towards the memory of the poet and the feelings of his surviving friends, as well as the interests of truth and virtue. The letters of Burns occupying two of the volumes, formed a feature of novelty which was highly appreciated. These compositions deepened the sense of his literary powers which had been previously entertained, particularly in England, where there was no drawback, as in the

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Dr Currie*, by his son William W. Currie. 2 vols. 1831.

poetry, to their being fully understood. It was admitted by Dr Aiken, then considered at the head of criticism in England, that English literature scarcely contained any compositions of the same nature equal to them. The success of the publication was great. Four editions, of 2000 copies each, were disposed of in the first four years. It is not unworthy of remark, that the first edition was printed in a very elegant style at Liverpool, by John M'Creery, a north-of-Ireland man of Scottish extraction, who had entered upon his task with a feeling superior to the usual principles of trade. He is described as a man of talent and extraordinary ardour of character, a lover of literature, and a worshipper of genius. He had exerted himself to render the volumes a beautiful specimen of the typographic art, and in this object he succeeded, so as to secure general admiration.<sup>1</sup> The profits of the work are stated by Mr Wallace Currie as having been L.1200; but I find in Dr Currie's own papers reference made to the sum of L.1400, as that realised for the widow and her family by the publication.

Mrs Burns continued to live in the same small house in which her husband died, an object of general respect on account of her modest and amiable character, and the interest associated with the memory of the poet. The proceeds of the fund raised for her, sufficed to enable her to bring up her sons in a creditable manner. Dr Currie paid her a visit in June 1804, when 'everything about her,' he says, 'bespoke decent competence, and even comfort. She shewed me the study and small library of her husband nearly as he left them. By everything I hear, she conducts herself irreproachably.'

He adds: 'From Mrs Burns's house, I went to the church-yard, at no great distance, to visit the grave of the poet. As it is still uninscribed, we could not have found it, had not a person we met with in the church-yard pointed it out. He told us he knew Burns well, and that he (Burns) himself chose the spot in which he is buried. His grave is on the north-east corner of the church-yard, which it fills up, and at the side of the grave of his two sons, Wallace and Maxwell, the first of whom, a lad of great promise, died last year of a consumption, the last immediately after his father.'

Robert, the eldest son, whose early intelligence seems to have excited general admiration, attended for two sessions at the university of Edinburgh, and one in the university of Glasgow. A situation being procured for him in the Stamp Office, London, he

<sup>1</sup> Ten copies were printed on thicker and finer paper than the rest—of which four were for the brother and three sisters of Burns, one to Syme, one to George Thomson, one to Murdoch (the poet's preceptor), and one to Mr Roscoe.

removed thither in 1804, and devoted himself to a routine of drudgeries which seems to have effectually repressed the literary tendencies of his mind. Only a few songs and miscellaneous pieces of poetry, some of which, however, possessed considerable merit, have proceeded from his pen. For twenty-nine years, he pursued this humble career, endeavouring to improve his slender income by privately teaching the classics and mathematics, and during this long time he was never able to revisit Scotland, or have a meeting with his mother. In 1833, having obtained a superannuation allowance, he retired to Dumfries, where he still lives (1852).

James and William, the two other surviving sons of the poet, obtained commissions in the East India Company's service through the kindness of the Marchioness of Hastings. They passed through a most honourable career of service, attaining respectively the ranks of major and lieutenant-colonel. In their wanderings in a foreign land, they ever found their name and parentage a passport to the friendship of all whom they encountered or with whom they were associated. Among their most cherished desires, was that of adding to the comforts of their mother. Mr Maule of Panmure (afterwards Lord Panmure) had, in 1817, settled a pension upon Mrs Burns of £.50 a year, and this she had enjoyed about a year and a half, when her son James, having obtained a place in the commissariat, was able to relieve her from the necessity of being beholden to a stranger's generosity. Mrs Burns, through the liberality of her children, spent her latter years in comparative affluence, yet 'never changed, nor wished to change her place.' In March 1834, at the age of sixty-eight, she closed her respectable life in the same room in which her husband had breathed his last thirty-eight years before.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The household effects of Mrs Burns were sold by public auction on the 10th and 11th of April, and brought uncommonly high sums, from the anxiety of the public to possess relics of this interesting household. According to the *Dumfries Courier*, 'the auctioneer commenced with small articles, and when he came to a broken copper coffee-pot, there were so many bidders, that the price paid exceeded twenty-fold the intrinsic value. A tea-kettle of the same metal succeeded, and reached £.2 sterling. Of the linens, a tablecloth, marked 1792, which, speaking commercially, may be worth half-a-crown or five shillings, was knocked down at £.5, 7s. Many other articles commanded handsome prices, and the older and plainer the furniture, the better it sold. The rusty iron top of a shower-bath, which Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop sent to the poet when afflicted with rheumatism, was bought by a Carlisle gentleman for £.1, 8s.; and a low wooden kitchen-chair, on which the late Mrs Burns sat when nursing her children, was run up to £.3, 7s. The crystal and china were much coveted, and brought, in most cases, splendid prices. Even an old fender reached a figure which would go far to buy half a dozen new ones, and everything towards the close attracted notice, down to greybeards, bottles, and a half-worn pair of bellows. The poet's eight-day clock, made by a Mauchline artist, attracted great attention, from the circumstance that it had frequently been wound up by his own hand. In a few seconds it was bid up to £.15 or guineas,

Mr Gilbert Burns, the early companion, and at all times the steadfast friend of the poet, continued to struggle with the miserable soil of Mossgiel till about the year 1797, when he removed to the farm of Dinning, on the estate of Mr Monteath of Closeburn, in Nithsdale. He, some years after, united himself to a Miss Breckonridge, by whom he had six sons and five daughters. He was a man of sterling sense and sagacity, pious without asceticism or bigotry, and entertaining liberal and enlightened views, without being the least of an enthusiast. His letter to Dr Currie, dated from Dinning, October 24, 1800, shews no mean powers of composition, and embodies nearly all the philanthropic views of human improvement which have been so broadly realised in our own day. We are scarcely more affected by the consideration of the penury under which some of his brother's noblest compositions were penned, than by the reflection, that this beautiful letter was the effusion of a man who, with his family, daily wrought long and laboriously under all those circumstances of parsimony which characterise Scottish rural life. Some years after, Mr Gilbert Burns was appointed by Lady Blantyre to be land-steward or factor upon her estate of Lethington, in East-Lothian, to which place he accordingly removed. His conduct in this capacity, during nearly twenty-five years, was marked by such fidelity and prudence as to give the most perfect satisfaction to his titled employer.

When the fourteen years' copyright of Dr<sup>r</sup> Currie's edition of the poet's works expired, and other publishers began, as usual, to reprint it, Messrs Cadell & Davies were anxious to maintain a preference for their own impressions in the market, and bethought them that this might be secured by their inducing Mr Gilbert Burns to add such notes and make such changes as he thought desirable. Gilbert was the more ready to yield to their wish, that he had now been convinced by two of his brother's surviving intimates, Messrs Gray and Findlater, that Dr Currie had done injustice to the poet's memory. A negotiation was entered upon, which excited some attention in unexpected quarters. Mr Wordsworth issued a pamphlet, in the form of a letter to Mr Gray, discussing the whole question as to the extent of revelation required from the biographer of an author, with regard to the character of his subject, and especially any imputed failings. He avowed a sense of indignation at Dr Currie for revealing so much

and was finally disposed of for £.35. The purchaser had a hard battle to fight; but his spirit was good, and his purse obviously not a light one, and the story ran that he had instructed Mr Richardson to secure a preference at any sum under £.60.'

of the infirmities of Burns, and professed his desire to see this evil corrected. Gilbert Burns, while he felt annoyed at Wordsworth's interference, resolved to act on the same view of the subject. This brought forth an indignant inquiry from Mr Roscoe, regarding the faults imputed to his friend Dr Currie, whose work, he said, had been, at its publication, approved of by none more loudly than by Gilbert Burns. Gilbert explained that, at the time when Dr Currie's book came out, he supposed that the biographer had spoken of his brother's errors from good information. He himself, having for the last few years of the poet's life lived fifty miles off, had not opportunities of knowing how the case really stood : he therefore approved of Dr Currie's memoir at the time; but afterwards, from what he had learned from Mr Findlater, he became convinced that the statements had been exaggerated. The reader of the present work has an opportunity of judging (see Appendix, No. 13) to what extent Gilbert acted discreetly in disturbing the matter which Currie has treated so gently.

The edition which Gilbert Burns consequently prepared, and which appeared in 1820, must be regarded as a failure, as far as the views of the publishers were concerned. Messrs Cadell & Davies from the first desired a mass of fresh information, to illustrate both the course of the poet's life and his poems. When Gilbert Burns, in reply to their inquiry, asked L.500 for his trouble, they were confirmed in their expectation of such a new edition as would maintain a superiority over all others; and with some difficulty they brought themselves to agree to the demand. Their disappointment must have been great, when they found that their editor furnished only a very few meagre notes, did not admit any pieces excluded by Currie, and distinguished his edition chiefly by giving two letters on the poet's character from Gray and Findlater, together with a dissertation from his own pen on the effect of the Scottish national religion upon the Scottish national character! In reality, as only one edition was printed, the money paid to Gilbert was L.250, another moiety of the stipulated sum being contingent upon a reprint. If left to himself, he would have probably asked comparatively a trifle, if anything at all, for what he chiefly regarded as a labour of love and duty; it was Mr Gray, who, loving booksellers as little as he loved authors much, prompted this simple and worthy man to make a charge so much beyond all ordinary scales of literary remuneration. Gilbert seems to have been greatly relieved when Cadell and Davies 'regarding the handsomeness of the amount as a mark of what it will be in your power to do for us,' at once acceded to a proposition which, the other very naïvely says, 'I scarce could muster impudence to name.'

The receipt of the money enabled Gilbert to discharge to the widow of his brother the debt he had contracted thirty-two years before, when the generous poet advanced him L.180 out of the profits of his poems. After all, it was not appropriated by the poet's widow, but applied to relieve another member of the family from the pressure of poverty.

The mother of Robert and Gilbert Burns lived in the household of the latter at Grant's Braes, near Lethington, till 1820, when she died at the age of eighty-eight, and was buried in the church-yard of Bolton. In personal aspect, Robert Burns resembled his mother; Gilbert had the more aquiline features of his father. The portrait of Robert Burns, painted by a Mr Taylor, and of which an engraving was published by Messrs Constable & Company a few years ago, bore a striking resemblance to Gilbert. This excellent man died at Grant's Braes, November 8, 1827, aged about sixty-seven years.

After many years had passed without bringing the public to the raising of a monument over the remains of Burns, his widow, out of her small means, placed an unpretending stone upon his grave, merely indicating his name and age, and those of his two sons interred in the same spot. At length, Mr William Grierson, who had been acquainted with Burns, and had attended his funeral, succeeded in getting a few gentlemen together, by whom a committee was formed for the purpose of collecting subscriptions for that object.

Money was speedily obtained; a plan was selected, and the foundations of a mausoleum were laid in St Michael's Churchyard, at a little distance from the angle where the remains of the poet had been originally placed. On the 19th of September 1815, the coffin of Burns was raised from its original resting-place, that it might be deposited in the new monument. On the lid being removed, 'there,' says Mr M'Diarmid, 'lay the remains of the great poet, to all appearance entire, retaining various traces of recent vitality, or to speak more correctly, exhibiting the features of one who had recently sunk into the sleep of death. The forehead struck every one as beautifully arched, if not so high as might reasonably have been supposed, while the scalp was rather thickly covered with hair, and the teeth perfectly firm and white.<sup>1</sup> Altogether, the scene was so imposing, that the commonest workmen stood uncovered, as the late Dr Gregory did at the exhumation of the remains of King Robert Bruce, and for some moments remained inactive, as if thrilling under the effects of some undefinable emotion, while gazing on all that remained of one "whose

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, No. 15.

fame is wide as the world itself." But the scene, however imposing, was brief; for the instant the workmen inserted a shell beneath the original wooden coffin, the head separated from the trunk, and the whole body, with the exception of the bones, crumbled into dust.' The monument erected on this occasion is an elegant Grecian temple, adorned with a mural sculpture by Turnerelli, descriptive of the idea of Coila finding Burns at the plough, and flinging her inspiring mantle over him.

## VERSICLES OF BURNS.

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BURNS was much addicted through life to the enunciation of impromptu verses, in the form of epigrams and epitaphs, generally of a satiric character. Having provided himself in Edinburgh with a diamond suitable for writing on glass, he often scribbled these hasty productions on the windows of inns and taverns, thus gratifying the whim of the moment too often at the expense of prudence and self-respect. Dr Currie remarks, that the epigrams of Burns are strikingly inferior to his other writings, and few will be inclined to dissent from the opinion. They often, indeed, are totally without point, so that one wonders how they should have ever been committed to writing, much more that so many of them should have been printed by the author. In the present work, all of these versicles which are connected with the poet's biography are presented at their proper places: the remainder are here grouped together, with such prose annotation as seems necessary to illustrate them and give them signification.

### EPITAPH FOR GAVIN HAMILTON.

The poor man weeps—here Gavin sleeps,  
Whom canting wretches blamed:  
But with such as he, where'er he be,  
May I be saved or damned!

---

### EPITAPH FOR ROBERT AIKEN, ESQ.

Know thou, O stranger to the fame  
Of this much-loved, much-honoured name!  
(For none that knew him need be told)  
A warmer heart death ne'er made cold.

## EPITAPH ON A CELEBRATED RULING ELDER.

Here souter Hood in death does sleep—

To hell, if he's gane thither,

Satan, gie him thy gear to keep,

He'll haud it weel thegither.

money

ON WEE JOHNNY.<sup>1</sup>

HIC JACET WEE JOHNNY.

Whoe'er thou art, O reader, know

That death has murdered Johnny!

And here his body lies fu' low—

For saul he ne'er had ony.

It is curious that in a rare old work, *Nugae Venales, sive Thesaurus ridendi et jocandi*, &c., bearing date 1663, but no place or publisher's name, there is a Latin epigram turning upon exactly the same jest :

'Oh Deus omnipotens, vituli miserere Joannis,  
Quem mors præveniens non sinit esse bovem :  
Corpus in Italia est, habet intestina Brabantus,  
Ast animam nemo : Cur ? quia non habuit.'

Among Burns's acquaintance at Mauchline was a mason named James Humphry, who, if devoid of the genius of the poet, at least possessed equal flow of language, and a scarcely less remarkable gift for theological controversy. Burns and he had had many collisions on the subject of New Light, and it appears that the mason entertained somewhat strong views both as to the bard's heterodoxy and his morals. Burns, passing along the street of the village one evening, and seeing Humphry lounging at a corner, stopped for a moment, and asked him what news. 'Oh, nothing very particular on earth,' answered the polemic; 'but there's strange news from "below." 'Ah, what's that?' inquired Burns, opening his eyes pretty wide. 'Why, they say that the auld deil has died lately, and that when the imps met to elect a successor, they fell sadly by the ears. Some of them were for taking one of their own number; but others had heard that there was one Rob Burns upon earth, that was likely to make a much better deil, and it seems they are determined, if they can, to elect *him*!' The poet, though he could not have helped being

<sup>1</sup> Mr John Wilson, the printer of his poems at Kilmarnock.

amused with the insinuation, left Humphry with a pettish exclamation. He afterwards penned a quatrain on Humphry, which, it must be admitted, contains not merely less wit than his antagonist's story of the infernal election, but no wit at all:

## ON A NOISY POLEMIC.

Below thir stanes lie Jamie's banes:  
O Death, it's my opinion,  
Thou ne'er took such a bleth'rin' bitch  
Into thy dark dominion!

Humphry, nevertheless, lived to be in such poverty, as to be glad to claim being the subject of the satire of Burns, for the sake of the scraps of charity which it obtained for him.<sup>1</sup>

## EPITAPH ON A HEN-PECKED COUNTRY SQUIRE.

As Father Adam first was fooled,  
A case that's still too common—  
Here lies a man a woman ruled,  
The devil ruled the woman.

## EPIGRAM ON SAID OCCASION.

O Death, hadst thou but spared his life,  
Whom we this day lament!  
We freely wad exchanged the wife,  
And a' been weel content.  
  
E'en as he is, cauld in his graff,  
The swap we yet will do';  
Tak thou the carline's carcass aff,  
Thou'se get the saul to boot.

exchange

<sup>1</sup> Poor Humphry latterly found shelter in one of a set of free cottages built at Blackhill, in Torbolton parish, by the late Mr Cooper of Smithston, enjoying at the same time a pension of 3s. a week from a fund left by the same benevolent gentleman. He died in 1844, at the age of eighty-six. To the last, he took a keen interest in matters pertaining to theological and ecclesiastical disputes. The parish minister called for him when he was near his end, and, after a prayer, took leave of him without any expectation of again seeing him in life. Humphry seemed to have something on his mind—he waved the minister back, and said: 'Man, what d' ye think o' the *Frees*?' Such, in the crisis of the Disruption, was the man who had battled with Burns on points respecting the *New Light* sixty years before.

In his early days, he was a member of a dissenting congregation at Mauchline, and of course had seats in the meeting-house. He had often offended by his over-free life, and been warned: at length, energetic measures were determined on, and he was forbidden to approach the communion-table. Hereupon Humphry sent the bellman through the town, to proclaim 'Seats in the meeting-house to be had cheap—cheap—cheap as dirt—apply to James Humphry!' This gives some idea of the man.

## ANOTHER.

One Queen Artemisia, as old stories tell,  
 When deprived of her husband she lovèd so well,  
 In respect for the love and affection he shewed her,  
 She reduced him to dust, and she drank off the powder.

But Queen Netherplace, of a different complexion,  
 When called on to order the funeral direction,  
 Would have ate her dead lord, on a slender pretence,  
 Not to shew her respect, but—to save the expense!

---

## TAM THE CHAPMAN.

As Tam the Chapman on a day  
 Wi' Death forgathered by the way,  
 Weel pleased, he greets a wight sae famous,  
 And Death was nae less pleased wi' Thamas,  
 Wha cheerfully lays down his pack,  
 And there blaws up a hearty crack ;  
 His social, friendly, honest heart  
 Sae tickled Death, they couldna part :  
 Sae, after viewing knives and garters,  
 Death takts him hame to gie him quarters.

Tam the Chapman was a person named Kennedy, whom Burns had known in boyhood, and whom he afterwards encountered as an itinerant merchant, when he found him a pleasant companion and estimable man. Tam, in old age, was known to William Cobbett, who printed these lines, either from a manuscript or from recollection.

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## VERSES TO JOHN RANKINE.

Ae day, as Death, that greusome carle,  
 Was driving to the tither warl'  
 A mixtie-maxtie, motley squad,  
 And mony a guilt-bespotted lad ;  
 Black gowns of each denomination,  
 And thieves of every rank and station,  
 From him that wears the star and garter,  
 To him that wintles in a halter :  
 Ashamed himsel' to see the wretches,  
 He mutters, glowrin' at the bitches :  
 'By G—, I'll not be seen behint them,  
 Nor 'mang the sp'ritual core present them,

Without, at least, ae honest man,  
To grace this d—d infernal clan.'  
By Adamhill a glance he threw,  
'L—G—!' quoth he, 'I have it now;  
There's just the man I want, i' faith!'  
And quickly stoppit Rankine's breath.

---

## ON MISS J. SCOTT, OF AYR.

Oh, had each Scot of ancient times,  
Been JEANY SCOTT, as thou art;  
The bravest heart on English ground,  
Had yielded like a coward.

---

## THE BOOK-WORMS.

'Burns,' says Allan Cunningham, 'on a visit to a nobleman, was shewn into the library, where stood a Shakspeare, splendidly bound, but unread, and much worm-eaten. Long after the poet's death, some one happened to open, accidentally perhaps, the same neglected book, and found this epigram in the handwriting of Burns:'

Through and through th' inspirèd leaves,  
Ye maggots, make your windings;  
But oh! respect his lordship's taste,  
And spare the golden bindings.

---

## GRACES BEFORE MEAT.

Some hae meat and canna eat,  
And some would eat that want it;  
But we hae meat and we can eat,  
Sae let the Lord be thankit.

---

O Thou, who kindly dost provide  
For every creature's want!  
We bless Thee, God of Nature wide,  
For all thy goodness lent:  
And, if it please Thee, heavenly guide,  
May never worse be sent;  
But whether granted or denied,  
Lord, bless us with content!      *Amen!*

O Thou, in whom we live and move,  
 Who mad'st the sea and shore ;  
 Thy goodness constantly we prove,  
 And grateful would adore.  
 And if it please Thee, Power above,  
 Still grant us, with such store,  
 The friend we trust, the fair we love,  
 And we desire no more.

---

## EXTEMPORANEOUS GRACE ON A HAGGIS.

Ye powers wha gie us a' that's gude,  
 Still bless auld Caledonia's brood,  
 Wi' great John Barleycorn's heart's bluid,  
 In stoups or luggies ;  
 And on our board the king o' food,  
 A glorious haggis !

It has been stated, that being present at a party where a haggis formed part of the entertainment, and being asked to say something appropriate on the occasion, Burns produced this stanza by way of grace ; which being well received, he was induced to expand it into the poem entitled *To a Haggis*, retaining the verse in an altered form as a peroration.

---

When Burns was in Edinburgh, he was introduced by a friend to the studio of a well-known painter, whom he found engaged on a representation of Jacob's dream; after minutely examining the work, he wrote the following verse on the back of a little sketch which is still preserved in the painter's family :—

Dear —, I'll gie ye some advice,  
 You'll tak it no uncivil :  
 You shouldna paint at angels mair,  
 But try and paint the devil.

To paint an angel's kittle wark,  
 Wi' auld Nick there's less danger ;  
 You'll easy draw a weel-kent face,  
 But no sae weel a stranger.

R. B.

## ON MR W. CRUIKSHANK,

OF THE HIGH SCHOOL, EDINBURGH.

Honest Will to heaven is gane,  
 And mony shall lament him ;  
 His faults they a' in Latin lay,  
 In English nane e'er kent them.

---

## ON MR W. NICOL.

Ye maggots, feed on Nicol's brain,  
 For few sic feasts ye've gotten ;  
 You've got a prize o' Willie's heart,  
 For deil a bit o't's rotten.

---

## ON MR W. MICHIE,

SCHOOLMASTER, CLEISH, FIFESHIRE.

Here lie Willie Michie's banes ;  
 O Satan, when ye tak him,  
 Gie him the schoolin' o' your weans,  
 For clever deils he'll mak 'em !

---

## ON MISS BURNS.

Cease, ye prudes, your envious railings,  
 Lovely Burns has charms, confess :  
 True it is, she had one failing—  
 Had a woman ever less ?

---

## WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCH.

A cauld, cauld day December blew,  
 A cauld, cauld kirk, and in't but few ;  
 A caulder minister never spak,  
 It'se be warmer weather ere I come back.

## ON A FRIEND.

An honest man here lies at rest  
 As e'er God with his image blest!  
 The friend of man, the friend of truth;  
 The friend of age, and guide of youth;

Few hearts like his, with virtue warmed,  
 Few heads with knowledge so informed:  
 If there's another world, he lives in bliss;  
 If there is none, he made the best of this.

---

## HOWLET FACE.

'One of the lords of Justiciary, when holding circuit at Dumfries, dined one day with Mr Miller at Dalswinton. According to the custom of the times, the after-dinner libations were somewhat copious; and, on entering the drawing-room, his lordship's visual organs were so much affected, that he asked Mr Miller, pointing to one of his daughters, who were reckoned remarkably handsome women, "Wha's yon howlet-faced thing in the corner?"

'Next day, Burns, who then resided at Ellisland, happened to be a guest at Dalswinton, and, in the course of conversation, his lordship's very ungallant and unjust remark was mentioned to him. He immediately took from his pocket an old letter, on the back of which he wrote in pencil the following lines, and handed them to Miss Miller:—

How daur ye ca' me howlet-faced,  
 Ye ugly, glowering spectre?  
 My face was but the keekin' glass,  
 An' there ye saw your picture.'

*Correspondent.*

---

## THE SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT.

[Spoken in reply to a gentleman who sneered at the sufferings of Scotland for conscience' sake, and called the Solemn League and Covenant ridiculous and fanatical.]

The Solemn League and Covenant  
 Cost Scotland blood—cost Scotland tears;—  
 But it sealed freedom's sacred cause—  
 If thou'rt a slave, indulge thy sneers.

## ON A CERTAIN PARSON'S LOOKS.

That there is falsehood in his looks  
 I must and will deny;  
 They say their master is a knave—  
 And sure they do not lie.

---

## WILLIE STEWART.

'Sir Walter Scott possesses a tumbler, on which are the following verses, written by Burns on the arrival of a friend, Mr W. Stewart, factor to a gentleman of Nithsdale. The landlady being very wroth at what she considered the disfigurement of her glass, a gentleman present appeased her by paying down a shilling, and carried off the relic.'—*Lockhart*.

You're welcome, Willie Stewart;  
 You're welcome, Willie Stewart;  
 There's ne'er a flower that blooms in May,  
 That's half sae welcome's thou art.

Come, bumpers high, express your joy,  
 The bowl we maun renew it;  
 The tappit-hen,<sup>1</sup> gae bring her ben,  
 To welcome Willie Stewart.

May foes be strang, and friends be slack,  
 Ilk action may he rue it;  
 May woman on him turn her back,  
 That wrangs thee, Willie Stewart!

---

## ANDREW TURNER.

Being called impertinently one evening from a party of friends at the King's Arms, Dumfries, to see a vain coxcomb in the form of an English commercial traveller, who, having a bottle of wine on his table, thought he might patronise the *Ayrshire Ploughman*, Burns entered into conversation with the creature, and soon saw what sort of person he had to deal with. About to leave the room, Burns was urged to give a taste of his powers of

<sup>1</sup> 'A cant phrase denoting a tin measure, containing a quart, so called from the knob on the lid, supposed to resemble a crested hen.'—*Jamieson*.

impromptu versifying before he went, when, having asked the stranger's name and age, he instantly penned and handed to him the stanza which follows—after which he abruptly departed.

In seventeen hundred forty-nine,  
Satan took stuff to make a swine,  
    And cuist it in a corner ;  
But wily he changed his plan,  
And shaped it something like a man,  
    And ca'd it Andrew Turner !

---

#### VERSES TO JOHN M' MURDO, ESQ.

WITH A PRESENT OF BOOKS.

Oh, could I give thee India's wealth,  
    As I this trifle send,  
Because thy joy in both would be  
    To share them with a friend !

But golden sands did never grace  
    The Heliconian stream ;  
Then take what gold could never buy—  
    An honest Bard's esteem.

[Mr M'Murdo resided at Drumlanrig, as chamberlain to the Duke of Queensberry. He and his wife and daughters are alluded to in the election piece entitled *Second Epistle to Mr Graham of Fintry*. They were kind and hospitable friends of Burns, who celebrated several of the young ladies in his songs.]

---

#### ON MR M' MURDO.

INSCRIBED ON A PANE OF GLASS IN HIS HOUSE.

Blest be M'Murdo to his latest day !  
No envious cloud o'ercast his evening ray ;  
No wrinkle furrowed by the hand of care,  
Nor ever sorrow add one silver hair !  
Oh, may no son the father's honour stain,  
Nor ever daughter give the mother pain !

---

#### WRITTEN ON A WINDOW OF THE GLOBE TAVERN, DUMFRIES.

The graybeard, old Wisdom, may boast of his treasures,  
    Give me with gay Folly to live ;  
I grant him his calm-blooded, time-settled pleasures,  
    But Folly has raptures to give.

## EXCISEMEN UNIVERSAL.

WRITTEN ON A WINDOW.<sup>1</sup>

Ye men of wit and wealth, why all this sneering  
 'Gainst poor excisemen ? give the cause a hearing.  
 What are your landlords' rent-rolls ? teasing ledgers :  
 What premiers—what ? even monarchs' mighty gaugers :  
 Nay, what are priests, those seeming godly wise men ?  
 What are they, pray, but spiritual excisemen ?

---

## ON A GROTTO IN FRIARS' CARSE GROUNDS.

To Riddel, much-lamented man,  
 This ivied cot was dear ;  
 Reader, dost value matchless worth ?  
 This ivied cot revere.

---

## ON A NOTED COXCOMB.

Light lay the earth on Billy's breast,  
 His chicken heart's so tender ;  
 But build a castle on his head,  
 His skull will prop it under.

---

## ON COMMISSARY GOLDIE'S BRAINS.

Lord, to account who dares thee call,  
 Or e'er dispute thy pleasure ?  
 Else why within so thick a wall  
 Enclose so poor a treasure ?<sup>2</sup>

---

EPITAPH ON MR GABRIEL RICHARDSON, BREWER, DUMFRIES.<sup>3</sup>

Here brewer Gabriel's fire's extinct,  
 And empty all his barrels ;  
 He's blest if as he brewed he drink,  
 In upright honest morals.

<sup>1</sup> In the King's Arms Inn, Dumfries, in consequence of overhearing a gentleman speak spitefully of the officers of Excise.

<sup>2</sup> From a blank leaf of a copy of Burns's works, in possession of Mrs Lindsay, 48 Albany Street, Edinburgh.

<sup>3</sup> Father of Sir John Richardson, the arctic traveller.

## ON JOHN BUSHBY, WRITER, DUMFRIES.

Here lies John Bushby, honest man !  
Cheat him, devil, if you can.

---

## TO MISS JESSY LEWARS.

WITH A PRESENT OF BOOKS.

Thine be the volumes, Jessy fair,  
And with them take the Poet's prayer—  
That Fate may in her fairest page,  
With every kindliest, best presage  
Of future bliss, enrol thy name :  
With native worth, and spotless fame,  
And wakeful caution still aware  
Of ill—but chief, man's felon snare ;  
All blameless joys on earth we find,  
And all the treasures of the mind—  
These be thy guardian and reward ;  
So prays thy faithful friend, the Bard.

---

## THE EARL OF GALLOWAY.

Burns had an antipathy of old-standing towards the Earl of Galloway. It was against him that he launched invectives when Mr Syme pointed to Garlies House, across the Bay of Wigton, in the course of their excursion in July 1793. There is a string of epigrams which the irascible bard launched at this respectable nobleman, with of course no other effect than to make moderate-minded men lament his own subordination of judgment to spleen.

What dost thou in that mansion fair ?—  
Flit, Galloway, and find  
Some narrow, dirty, dungeon cave,  
The picture of thy mind !

---

No Stewart art thou, Galloway,  
The Stewarts all were brave ;  
Besides, the Stewarts were but fools,  
Not one of them a knave.

Bright ran thy line, O Galloway,  
Through many a far-famed sire!  
So ran the far-famed Roman way,  
So ended in a mire.

On being informed [misinformed ?] that the earl threatened him with his resentment—

Spare me thy vengeance, Galloway ;  
In quiet let me live :  
I ask no kindness at thy hand,  
For thou hast none to give.

It may be curious to contrast with these ungracious and substantially unjust quatrains, the newspaper character of the earl at his death in 1806. ‘ His loss will be extensively and deeply felt; his numerous friends and connections profited by his advice and assistance; his active frame and mind he never spared; he did nothing by halves. As a husband and father, he was exemplary; as a friend, indefatigable; he adored the Supreme Being; he loved his king; his affairs prospered. He was admired for his taste in music; and had great skill in agricultural pursuits.’ For once, a friendly obituary notice may be accepted in evidence; it was at least nearer the truth than Burns’s election lampoons and epigrams.

## SONGS OF WHICH THE DATE IS NOT KNOWN.

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### CALEDONIA.

TUNE—*Caledonian Hunt's Delight.*

There was once a day—but old Time then was young—  
That brave Caledonia, the chief of her line,  
From some of your northern deities sprung  
(Who knows not that brave Caledonia's divine?)  
From Tweed to the Orcades was her domain,  
To hunt, or to pasture, or do what she would :  
Her heavenly relations there fix'd her reign,  
And pledged her their godheads to warrant it good.

A lambkin in peace, but a lion in war,  
The pride of her kindred the heroine grew :  
Her grandsire, old Odin, triumphantly swore,  
' Whoe'er shall provoke thee, th' encounter shall rue !'  
With tillage or pasture at times she would sport,  
To feed her fair flocks by her green rustling corn ;  
But chiefly the woods were her fav'rite resort,  
Her darling amusement the hounds and the horn.

Long quiet she reigned ; till thitherward steers  
A flight of bold eagles from Adria's strand :  
Repeated, successive, for many long years,  
They darkened the air, and they plundered the land ;  
Their pounces were murder, and terror their cry,  
They'd conquered and ruined a world beside ;  
She took to her hills, and her arrows let fly—  
The daring invaders they fled or they died.

The fell harpy-raven took wing from the north,  
The scourge of the seas, and the dread of the shore ;  
The wild Scandinavian boar issued forth  
To wanton in carnage, and wallow in gore :  
O'er countries and kingdoms their fury prevailed,  
No arts could appease them, no arms could repel ;  
But brave Caledonia in vain they assailed,  
As Largs well can witness, and Loncartie tell.

The Cameleon-savage disturbed her repose,  
 With tumult, disquiet, rebellion, and strife ;  
 Provoked beyond bearing, at last she arose,  
 And robbed him at once of his hopes and his life :  
 The Anglian lion, the terror of France,  
 Oft prowling, ensanguined the Tweed's silver flood :  
 But, taught by the bright Caledonian lance,  
 He learned to fear in his own native wood.

Thus bold, independent, unconquered, and free,  
 Her bright course of glory for ever shall run :  
 For brave Caledonia immortal must be ;  
 I'll prove it from Euclid as clear as the sun :  
 Rectangle-triangle the figure we'll choose,  
 The upright is Chance, and old Time is the base ;  
 But brave Caledonia's the hypotenuse ;  
 Then ergo, she'll match them, and match them always.

---

## O WHA IS SHE THAT LOES ME?

TUNE—*Morag.*

O wha is she that loes me,  
 And has my heart a keeping ?  
 O sweet is she that loes me,  
 As dews o' simmer weeping,  
 In tears the rose-buds steeping !  
 O that's the lassie o' my heart,  
 My lassie ever dearer ;  
 O that's the queen o' womankind,  
 And ne'er a ane to peer her.

If thou shalt meet a lassie  
 In grace and beauty charming,  
 That e'en thy chosen lassie,  
 Erewhile thy breast sae warming,  
 Had ne'er sic powers alarming ;  
 O that's the lassie, &c.

If thou hadst heard her talking,  
 And thy attentions plighted,  
 That ilka body talking,  
 But her by thee is slighted,  
 And thou art all delighted ;  
 O that's the lassie, &c.

If thou hast met this fair one ;  
When frae her thou hast parted,  
If every other fair one,  
But her, thou hast deserted,  
And thou art broken-hearted ;  
O that's the lassie o' my heart,  
My lassie ever dearer ;  
O that's the queen o' womankind,  
And ne'er a ane to peer her.

## OLD SONGS IMPROVED BY BURNS, FROM JOHNSON'S MUSEUM.

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### O WHARE DID YOU GET?

TUNE—*Bonnie Dundee.*

[The air of *Bonnie Dundee* appears in the Skene MS., of date *circa* 1620. The tune seems to have existed at even an earlier period, as there is a song to it amongst those which were written by the English to disparage the Scottish followers by whom James VI. was attended on his arrival in the south. The first of the following verses is from an old homely ditty, the second only being the composition of Burns.]

O whare did you get that hauver meal bannock?  
O silly blind body, O dinna ye see ?  
I gat it frae a brisk young sodger laddie,  
Between St Johnston and bonnie Dundee.  
O gin I saw the laddie that gae me't!  
Aft has he doulded me upon his knee ;  
May Heaven protect my bonnie Scots laddie,  
And send him safe hame to his babie and me !  
  
My blessin's upon thy sweet wee lippie,  
My blessin's upon thy bonnie ee-bree !  
Thy smiles are sae like my blithe sodger laddie,  
Thou's aye the dearer and dearer to me !  
But I'll big a bower on yon bonnie banks,  
Where Tay rins wimplin' by sae clear ;  
And I'll cleed thee in the tartan sae fine,  
And mak thee a man like thy daddie dear.

---

### I AM MY MAMMY'S AE BAIRN.

TUNE—I'm owre young to Marry yet.

I am my mammy's ae bairn,  
Wi' unco folk I weary, sir ;  
And if I gang to your house,  
I'm fley'd 'twill make me eerie, sir.      afraid  
I'm owre young to marry yet ;  
I'm owre young to marry yet ;  
I'm owre young—'twad be a sin  
To tak me frae my mammy yet.

Hallowmas is come and gane,  
The nights are lang in winter, sir;  
And you and I in wedlock's bands,  
In troth, I dare na venture, sir.  
Fu' loud and shrill the frosty wind  
Blaws through the leafless timmer, sir;  
But if ye come this gate again,  
I'll aulder be gin simmer, sir.

## UP IN THE MORNING EARLY.

**TUNE—*Cold blows the Wind.***

[Written on the basis of an old song, the chorus of which is here preserved.]

## CHORUS.

Up in the morning's no for me,  
Up in the morning early;  
When a' the hills are covered wi' snow,  
I'm sure it's winter fairly.

Cauld blaws the wind frae east to west,  
The drift is driving sairly;  
Sae loud and shrill I hear the blast,  
I'm sure it's winter fairly.

The birds sit chittering in the thorn,  
A' day they fare but sparingly;  
And lang's the night frae e'en to morn—  
I'm sure it's winter fairly.

## THERE WAS A LASS.

TUNE—*Duncan Davison.*

There was a lass, they ca'd her Meg,  
And she held o'er the moors to spin;  
There was a lad that followed her,  
They ca'd him Duncan Davison.  
The moor was dreigh, and Meg was skeigh, tedious timorous  
Her favour Duncan could na win;  
For wi' the rock she wad him knock,  
And aye she shook the temper-pin.

But Duncan swore a haly aith,  
 That Meg should be a bride the morn,  
 Then Meg took up her spinnin' graith,  
 And flang them a' out o'er the burn.

We'll big a house—a wee, wee house,  
 And we will live like king and queen,  
 Sae blithe and merry we will be  
 When ye set by the wheel at e'en.  
 A man may drink and no be drunk ;  
 A man may fight and no be slain ;  
 A man may kiss a bonnie lass,  
 And aye be welcome back again.

---

## LADY ONLIE.

TUNE—*The Ruffian's Rant.*

A' the lads o' Thornie-bank,  
 When they gae to the shore o' Bucky,  
 They'll step in and tak a pint  
 Wi' Lady Onlie, honest Lucky !  
 Lady Onlie, honest Lucky !  
 Brews guid ale at shore o' Bucky ;  
 I wish her sale for her guid ale,  
 The best on a' the shore o' Bucky.

Her house sae bien, her curch sae clean,  
 I wat she is a dainty chucky ;  
 And cheerlie blinks the ingle-gleed  
 Of Lady Onlie, honest Lucky !  
 Lady Onlie, honest Lucky !  
 Brews guid ale at shore o' Bucky ;  
 I wish her sale for her guid ale,  
 The best on a' the shore o' Bucky.

---

## THE PLOUGHMAN.

The ploughman he's a bonnie lad,  
 His mind is ever true, jo,  
 His garters knit below his knee,  
 His bonnet it is blue, jo.  
 Then up wi't a', my ploughman lad,  
 And hey my merry ploughman ;  
 Of a' the trades that I do ken,  
 Commend me to the ploughman.

I hae been east, I hae been west,  
 I hae been at St Johnston;  
 The bonniest sight that e'er I saw,  
 Was the ploughman laddie dancin'.  
 Up wi't, &c.

Snaw-white stockins on his legs,  
 And siller buckles glancin';  
 A guid blue bonnet on his head,  
 And oh, but he was handsome.  
 Up wi't, &c.

[Of this piece, the two last verses alone are by Burns. For the longer song, including them, reference may be made to the *Museum*.]

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## MY HOGGIE.

What will I do gin my hoggie<sup>1</sup> die,  
 My joy, my pride, my hoggie?  
 My only beast, I had nae mae,  
 And oh, but I was vogie.

vain

The lee-lang night we watched the fauld,  
 Me and my faithfu' doggie,  
 We heard nought but the roaring linn,  
 Amang the braes sae scroggie.<sup>2</sup>

But the howlet cried frae the castle wa',  
 The blutter frae the boggie,  
 The tod replied upon the hill—  
 I trembled for my hoggie.

mire-snipe  
fox

When day did daw and cocks did craw,  
 The morning it was foggie,  
 An unco tyke lap o'er the dyke,  
 And maist has killed my hoggie.

dog

## SIMMER'S A PLEASANT TIME

TUNE—*Aye Waukin O.*

Simmer's a pleasant time,  
 Flowers of every colour;  
 The water rins o'er the heugh,  
 And I long for my true lover.

<sup>1</sup> ‘Hoggie, a young sheep after it is smeared, and before it is first shorn.’—*Stenhouse.*

<sup>2</sup> Full of stunted bushes.

Aye waukin O,  
Waukin still and wearie:  
Sleep I can get nane  
For thinking on my dearie.

When I sleep I dream,  
When I wauk I'm eerie : timorous  
Sleep I can get nane  
For thinking on my dearie.

Lanely night comes on,  
A' the lave are sleeping;  
I think on my bonnie lad,  
And bleer my een wi' greetin'.  
rest

[This is an old song, upon which Burns appears to have made only a few alterations.]

## FIRST WHEN MAGGY WAS MY CARE.

**TUNE—Whistle o'er the Lave o't.**

First when Maggy was my care,  
Heaven I thought was in her air;  
Now we're married—speir nae mair— inquire  
    Whistle o'er the lave o't.  
Meg was meek, and Meg was mild,  
Bonnie Meg was nature's child;  
Wiser men than me's beguiled—  
    Whistle o'er the lave o't.

How we live, my Meg and me,  
How we love, and how we 'gree,  
I care na by how few may see—  
Whistle o'er the lave o't.  
Wha I wish were maggots' meat,  
Dished up in her winding-sheet,  
I could write—but Meg maun see't—  
Whistle o'er the lave o't.

JAMIE, COME TRY ME.

Jamie, come try me;  
Jamie, come try me;  
If thou would win my love,  
Jamie, come try me.

If thou should ask my love,  
Could I deny thee?  
If thou would win my love,  
Jamie, come try me.

If thou should kiss me, love,  
Wha could espy thee?  
If thou would be my love,  
Jamie, come try me.

## A W A, WHIGS, A W A !

TUNE—*Awa, Whigs, awa.*

## CHORUS.

Awa, Whigs, awa !  
Awa, Whigs, awa !  
Ye're but a pack o' traitor louns,  
Ye'll do nae good at a'.

Our thrissles flourished fresh and fair,  
And bonnie bloomed our roses;  
But Whigs came like a frost in June,  
And withered a' our posies.

Our ancient crown's fa'n in the dust—  
Deil blin' them wi' the stour o't;  
And write their names in his black beuk,  
Wha gae the Whigs the power o't.

Our sad decay in Church and State  
Surpasses my descriving;  
The Whigs came o'er us for a curse,  
And we hae done wi' thriving.

Grim vengeance lang has ta'en a nap,  
But we may see him wauken;  
Guid help the day when royal heads  
Are hunted like a maukin.

hare

[The second and last stanzas alone are by Burns; the rest is from an old Jacobite song.]

## WHARE HAE YE BEEN?

TUNE—*Killiecrankie.*

Whare hae ye been sae braw, lad ?  
Where hae ye been sae brankie, O ?      pranked  
Oh, whare hae ye been sae braw, lad ?  
Cam ye by Killiecrankie, O ?

An ye had been whare I hae been,  
 Ye wad na been sae cantie, O;  
 An ye had seen what I hae seen,  
 On the braes of Killiecrankie, O.

merry

I fought at land, I fought at sea;  
 At hame I fought my auntie, O;  
 But I met the devil and Dundee,  
 On the braes o' Killiecrankie, O.  
 The bauld Pitcur fell in a furr,  
 And Clavers got a clankie, O;  
 Or I had fed an Athole gled,  
 On the braes o' Killiecrankie, O.

kite

[The chorus of this song is old; the rest of it was written by Burns.—*Stenhouse.*]

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## CA' THE EWES TO THE KNOWES.

Ca' the ewes to the knowes,  
 Ca' them where the heather grows,  
 Ca' them where the burnie rows,  
 My bonnie dearie.

As I gaed down the water-side,  
 There I met my shepherd lad,  
 He rowed me sweetly in his plaid,  
 And he ca'd me his dearie.

Will ye gang down the water-side,  
 And see the waves sae sweetly glide?  
 Beneath the hazel spreading wide,  
 The moon it shines fu' clearly.

[Ye sall get gowns and ribbons meet,  
 Cauf leather shoon upon your feet,  
 And in my arms ye'se lie and sleep,  
 And ye sall be my dearie.]

If ye but stand to what ye've said,  
 I'se gang wi' you, my shepherd lad,  
 And ye may row me in your plaid,  
 And I sall be your dearie.]

While waters wimple to the sea,  
 While day blinks in the lift sae hie,  
 Till clay-cauld death shall blin' my ee,  
 Ye sall be my dearie.

[The verses within brackets are old, with only a few touches of improvement by Burns.]

## FOR A' THAT, AND A' THAT.

Though women's minds, like winter winds,  
 May shift and turn, and a' that;  
 The noblest breast adores them maist,  
 A consequence I draw that.  
 For a' that, and a' that,  
 And twice as mickle's a' that,  
 The bonnie lass that I loe best,  
 Shall be my ain for a' that, &c.

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## YOUNG JOCKEY.

TUNE—*Young Jockey.*

Young Jockey was the blithest lad  
 In a' our town or here awa':  
 Fu' blithe he whistled at the gaud,  
 Fu' lightly danced he in the ha'.  
 He roosed my een, sae bonnie blue,  
 He roosed my waist, sae genty sma';  
 And aye my heart came to my mou',  
 When ne'er a body heard or saw.

praised

My Jockey toils upon the plain,  
 Through wind and weet, through frost and snew:  
 And o'er the lea I leuk fu' fain,  
 When Jockey's owsen hameward ca'.  
 And aye the night comes round again,  
 When in his arms he takes me a';  
 And aye he vows he'll be my ain,  
 As lang's he has a breath to draw.

[‘The whole of [this song], excepting three or four lines, is the production of Burns.’—*Stenhouse.*]

---

## WHA IS THAT AT MY BOWER DOOR?

TUNE—*Lass, an, I come near thee.*

Wha is that at my bower door?  
 O wha is it but Findlay:  
 Then gae your gate, ye's nae be here!  
 Indeed maun I, quo' Findlay.  
 What mak ye, sae like a thief?  
 O come and see, quo' Findlay.  
 Before the morn ye'll work mischief;  
 Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.

Gif I rise and let you in;  
 Let me in, quo' Findlay:  
 Ye'll keep me waukin' wi' your din;  
 Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.  
 In my bower if ye should stay;  
 Let me stay, quo' Findlay:  
 I fear ye'll bide till break o' day;  
 Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.

Here this night if ye remain;  
 I'll remain, quo' Findlay:  
 I dread ye'll learn the gate again;  
 Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.  
 What may pass within this bower;  
 Let it pass, quo' Findlay:  
 Ye maun conceal till your last hour;  
 Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.

[‘Mr Gilbert Burns told the editor (*Cromek*) that this song was suggested to his brother by the *Auld Man's Address to the Widow*, printed in Ramsay's *Tea-Table Miscellany*, which the poet first heard sung by Jean Wilson, a silly old widow-woman, then living at Torbolton, remarkable for the simplicity and *naïveté* of her character, and for singing old Scotch songs with a peculiar energy and earnestness of manner. Having outlived her family, she still retained the form of family worship; and before she sang a hymn, she would gravely give out the first line of the verse, as if she had a numerous audience, to the great diversion of her listening neighbours.’—*CROMEK*.]

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## THE TITHER MORN.

*To a Highland air.*

The tither morn, when I forlorn  
 Aneath an aik sat moaning,  
 I did na trow, I'd see my jo,  
 Beside me, 'gain the gloaming.  
 But he sae trig, lap o'er the rig,  
 And dawtingly did cheer me,  
 When I, what reck, did least expec',  
 To see my lad so near me.

His bonnet he, a thought ajee,  
 Cocked sprush when first he clasped me;  
 And I, I wat, wi' fainness grat,  
 While in his grips he pressed me.  
 Deil tak the war! I late and air,  
 Hae wished, since Jock departed;  
 But now as glad I'm wi' my lad,  
 As short syne broken-hearted.

Fu' aft at e'en wi' dancing keen,  
 When a' were blithe and merry,  
 I cared na by, sae sad was I,  
 In absence o' my dearie.  
 But, praise be blest, my mind's at rest,  
 I'm happy wi' my Johnny :  
 At kirk and fair, I se aye be there,  
 And be as canty's ony.

---

## AS I WAS A WANDERING.

TUNE—*Rinn Meudial mo Mhealladh.*

As I was a wandering ae midsummer e'enin',  
 The pipers and youngsters were making their game ;  
 Amang them I spied my faithless fause lover,  
 Which bled a' the wounds o' my dolour again.  
 Weel, since he has left me, may pleasure gae wi' him ;  
 I may be distressed, but I winna complain ;  
 I flatter my fancy I may get anither,  
 My heart it shall never be broken for ane.

I couldna get sleeping till dawin for greetin',  
 The tears trickled down like the hail and the rain :  
 Had I na got greetin', my heart wad ha' broken,  
 For oh ! love forsaken's a tormenting pain.

Although he has left me for greed o' the siller,  
 I dinna envy him the gains he can win ;  
 I rather wad bear a' the lade o' my sorrow  
 Than ever hae acted sae faithless to him.

[Burns has here merely made some changes upon an old song, and it is questionable if his alterations are improvements.]

---

## THE WEARY PUND O' TOW.

TUNE—*The Weary Pund o' Tow.*

The weary pund, the weary pund,  
 The 'weary pund o' tow ;  
 I think my wife will end her life  
 Before she spin her tow.

I bought my wife a stane o' lint  
 As guid as e'er did grow ;  
 And a' that she has made o' that,  
 Is ae poor pund o' tow.

There sat a bottle in a bole,  
 Beyont the ingle lowe,  
 And aye she took the tither souk,  
 To drouk the stowrie tow.

Quoth I, for shame, ye dirty dame,  
 Gae spin your tap o' tow !  
 She took the rock, and wi' a knock  
 She brak it o'er my pow.

At last her feet—I sang to see't—  
 Gaed foremost o'er the knowe ;  
 And or I wad anither jad,  
 I'll wallop in a tow.

---

## GANE IS THE DAY.

TUNE—*Guidwife, count the Lawin.*

Gane is the day, and mirk's the night,  
 But we'll ne'er stray for fau't o' light,  
 For ale and brandy's stars and moon,  
 And bluid-red wine's the rising sun.

Then guidwife, count the lawin,  
 The lawin, the lawin ;  
 Then guidwife, count the lawin,  
 And bring a coggie mair.

There's wealth and ease for gentlemen,  
 And simple folk maun fight and fen ;  
 But here we're a' in ae accord,  
 For ilka man that's drunk's a lord.

My coggie is a haly pool,  
 That heals the wounds o' care and dool ;  
 And pleasure is a wanton trout,  
 An ye drink but deep ye'll find him out.

---

## IT IS NA, JEAN, THY BONNIE FACE.

TUNE—*The Maid's Complaint.*

It is na, Jean, thy bonnie face  
 Nor shape that I admire,  
 Although thy beauty and thy grace  
 Might weel awake desire.

Something, in ilka part o' thee,  
 To praise, to love, I find ;  
 But dear as is thy form to me,  
 Still dearer is thy mind.

Nae mair ungenerous wish I hae,  
 Nor stronger in my breast,  
 Than if I canna mak thee sae,  
 At least to see thee blest.  
 Content am I, if Heaven shall give  
 But happiness to thee :  
 And as wi' thee I'd wish to live,  
 For thee I'd bear to die.

---

## MY COLLIER LADDIE.

TUNE—*The Collier Laddie.*

Where live ye, my bonnie lass ?  
 And tell me what they ca' ye ;  
 My name, she says, is Mistress Jean,  
 And I follow the Collier Laddie.

See you not yon hills and dales,  
 The sun shines on sae brawlie !  
 They a' are mine, and they shall be thine,  
 Gin ye'll leave your Collier Laddie.

Ye shall gang in gay attire,  
 Weel buskit up sae gaudy ;  
 And ane to wait on every hand,  
 Gin ye'll leave your Collier Laddie.

Though ye had a' the sun shines on,  
 And the earth conceals sae lowly ;  
 I wad turn my back on you and it a',  
 And embrace my Collier Laddie.

I can win my five pennies in a day,  
 And spen't at night fu' brawlie ;  
 And make my bed in the Collier's neuk,  
 And lie down wi' my Collier Laddie.

Luve for luve is the bargain for me,  
 Though the wee cot-house should haud me ;  
 And the world before me to win my bread,  
 And fair fa' my Collier Laddie.

[Burns, in his Notes, speaks of this song as an old one with which he had had nothing to do. As it appears, however, in no other collection, and is found in his handwriting among Johnson's manuscripts, Mr Stenhouse infers that the greater part of it is his own composition.]

## YE JACOBITES BY NAME.

TUNE—*Ye Jacobites by Name.*

Ye Jacobites by name, give an ear, give an ear;  
 Ye Jacobites by name, give an ear;  
 Ye Jacobites by name,  
 Your fautes I will proclaim,  
 Your doctrines I maun blame—  
 You shall hear.

What is right and what is wrang by the law, by the law?  
 What is right and what is wrang by the law?  
 What is right and what is wrang?  
 A short sword and a lang,  
 A weak arm, and a strang  
 For to draw.

What makes heroic strife famed afar, famed afar?  
 What makes heroic strife famed afar?  
 What makes heroic strife?  
 To whet th' assassin's knife,  
 Or hunt a parent's life  
 Wi' bluidie war.

Then let your schemes alone in the state, in the state;  
 Then let your schemes alone in the state;  
 Then let your schemes alone  
 Adore the rising sun,  
 And leave a man undone  
 To his fate.

## LADY MARY ANN.

TUNE—*Craigton's Growing.*

[“Modelled by Burns from an ancient ballad, entitled *Craigton's Growing.*—  
*Stenhouse.*”]

Oh, Lady Mary Ann looked o'er the castle wa';  
 She saw three bonnie boys playing at the ba';  
 The youngest he was the flower amang them a'—  
 My bonnie laddie's young, but he's growin' yet.

O father! O father! an ye think it fit,  
 We'll send him a year to the college yet:  
 We'll sew a green ribbon round about his hat,  
 And that will let them ken he's to marry yet.

Lady Mary Ann was a flower i' the dew,  
 Sweet was its smell, and bonnie was its hue;  
 And the langer it blossomed the sweeter it grew:  
 For the lily in the bud will be bonnier yet.

Young Charlie Cochrane was the sprout of an aik ;  
 Bonnie and bloomin' and straught was its make :  
 The sun took delight to shine for its sake,  
 And it will be the brag o' the forest yet.

The simmer is gane when the leaves they were green,  
 And the days are awa that we hae seen ;  
 But far better days I trust will come again,  
 For my bonnie laddie's young, but he's growin' yet.

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## KENMURE'S ON AND AWA.

TUNE—*O Kenmure's on and awa, Willie.*

**O** Kenmure's on and awa, Willie!  
 O Kenmure's on and awa !  
 And Kenmure's lord's the bravest lord  
 That ever Galloway saw.

Success to Kenmure's band, Willie !  
 Success to Kenmure's band ;  
 There's no a heart that fears a Whig  
 That rides by Kenmure's hand.

Here's Kenmure's health in wine, Willie !  
 Here's Kenmure's health in wine ;  
 There ne'er was a coward o' Kenmure's blude,  
 Nor yet o' Gordon's line.

**O** Kenmure's lads are men, Willie !  
 O Kenmure's lads are men ;  
 Their hearts and swords are metal true—  
 And that their faes shall ken.

They'll live or die wi' fame, Willie !  
 They'll live or die wi' fame ;  
 But soon, wi' sounding victorie,  
 May Kenmure's lord come hame.

Here's him that's far awa, Willie !  
 Here's him that's far awa !  
 And here's the flower that I love best—  
 The rose that's like the snaw !

[This song is supposed to be one of those which Burns only improved from old versions. William Gordon, sixth Viscount of Kenmure, raised a body of troops for the Pretender in 1715, and had the chief command of the insurgent forces in the south of Scotland. Taken at Preston, he was tried and condemned to be beheaded, which sentence was executed on the 24th February 1716. His forfeited estate was bought back by his widow, and transmitted to their son. By the son of that son—afterwards Viscount of Kenmure in consequence of the restoration of the title—Burns was on one occasion entertained at his romantic seat of Kenmure Castle, near New Galloway.]

## SUCH A PARCEL OF ROGUES IN A NATION.

TUNE—*A Parcel of Rogues in a Nation.*

Fareweel to a' our Scottish fame,  
 Fareweel our ancient glory,  
 Fareweel even to the Scottish name,  
 Sae famed in martial story.  
 Now Sark rins o'er the Solway sands,  
 And Tweed rins to the ocean,  
 To mark where England's province stands—  
 Such a parcel of rogues in a nation.

What force or guile could not subdue  
 Through many warlike ages,  
 Is wrought now by a coward few,  
 For hireling traitors' wages.  
 The English steel we could disdain,  
 Secure in valour's station ;  
 But English gold has been our bane—  
 Such a parcel of rogues in a nation.

O would, ere I had seen the day  
 That treason thus could fell us,  
 My auld gray head had lien in clay,  
 Wi' Bruce and loyal Wallace!  
 But pith and power, till my last hour,  
 I'll mak this declaration ;  
 We're bought and sold for English gold—  
 Such a parcel of rogues in a nation.

## THE CARLES OF DYSART.

TUNE—*Hey, ca' through.*

[Written upon the basis of an old song.]

Up wi' the carles o' Dysart,  
 And the lads o' Buckhaven,  
 And the kimmers o' Largo,  
 And the lasses o' Leven.  
 Hey, ca' through, ca' through,  
 For we hae mickle ado ;  
 Hey, ca' through, ca' through,  
 For we hae mickle ado.

We hae tales to tell,  
 And we hae sangs to sing ;  
 We hae pennies to spend,  
 And we hae pints to bring.

We'll live a' our days,  
 And them that come behin',  
 Let them do the like,  
 And spend the gear they win.

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## THE CARLE OF KELLYBURN BRAES.

TUNE—*Kellyburn Braes.*

[An old set of traditionalary verses modified by Burns.]

There lived a carle on Kellyburn Braes,  
 (Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme,)  
 And he had a wife was the plague o' his days ;  
 And the thyme it is withered, and rue is in prime.

Ae day as the carle gaed up the lang glen,  
 (Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme,)  
 He met wi' the devil; says, ‘ How do you fen ? ’  
 And the thyme it is withered, and rue is in prime.

‘ I've got a bad wife, sir ; that's a' my complaint ;  
 (Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme,)  
 For, saving your presence, to her ye're a saint :  
 And the thyme it is withered, and rue is in prime.’

‘ It's neither your stot nor your staig I shall crave,  
 (Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme,)  
 But gie me your wife, man, for her I must have,  
 And the thyme it is withered, and rue is in prime.’

‘ O welcome, most kindly,’ the blithe carle said,  
 (Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme,)  
 ‘ But if ye can match her, ye're waur than ye're ca'd,’  
 And the thyme it is withered, and rue is in prime.’

The devil has got the auld wife on his back ;  
 (Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme,)  
 And, like a poor pedler, he's carried his pack ;  
 And the thyme it is withered, and rue is in prime.

He's carried her hame to his ain hallan-door ;  
 (Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme,)  
 Syne bade her gae in, for a b—— and a ——,  
 And the thyme it is withered, and rue is in prime.

Then straight he makes fifty, the pick o' his band,  
 (Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme,)  
 Turn out on her guard in the clap of a hand ;  
 And the thyme it is withered, and rue is in prime.

The carline gaed through them like ony wud bear,  
 (Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme,)  
 Whae'er she gat hands on cam near her nae mair;  
 And the thyme it is withered, and rue is in prime.

A reekit wee devil looks over the wa';  
 (Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme,)  
 'Oh, help, master, help, or she'll ruin us a',  
 And the thyme it is withered, and rue is in prime.'

The devil he swore by the edge o' his knife,  
 (Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme,)  
 He pitied the man that was tied to a wife;  
 And the thyme it is withered, and rue is in prime.

The devil he swore by the kirk and the bell,  
 (Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme,)  
 He was not in wedlock, thank Heaven, but in hell;  
 And the thyme it is withered, and rue is in prime.

Then Satan has travelled again wi' his pack;  
 (Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme,)  
 And to her auld husband he's carried her back;  
 And the thyme it is withered, and rue is in prime.

'I hae been a devil the feck o' my life;  
 (Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme,)  
 But ne'er was in hell till I met wi' a wife;  
 And the thyme it is withered, and rue is in prime.'

## JOCKY FOU AND JENNY FAIN.

\* \* \*

Let love sparkle in her ee,  
 Let her loe nae man but me;  
 That's the tocher gude I prize,  
 There the lover's treasure lies.

[The above verse was thrown by Burns into a song by Ramsay.]

## THE SLAVE'S LAMENT.

It was in sweet Senegal that my foes did me enthral,  
 For the lands of Virginia, O;  
 Torn from that lovely shore, and must never see it more,  
 And alas I am weary, weary, O!

All on that charming coast is no bitter snow or frost,  
 Like the lands of Virginia, O ;  
 There streams for ever flow, and there flowers for ever blow,  
 And alas I am weary, weary, O !

The burden I must bear, while the cruel scourge I fear,  
 In the lands of Virginia, O ;  
 And I think on friends most dear, with the bitter, bitter tear,  
 And alas I am weary, weary, O !

[‘The words and the music of this song were communicated by Burns for the Museum.’—*Stenhouse*. ‘I believe that Burns took the idea of his verses from the *Betrayed Maid*, a ballad formerly much hawked about in Scotland.’—*C. K. Sharpe*. One might have hesitated to assign this song to Burns; but certainly his authorship of it is much fortified by its resemblance to another song of his, entitled *The Ruined Farmer’s Lament*, which seems to have been formed on the same model; see vol. ii., p. 314.]

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#### COMING THROUGH THE RYE.

TUNE—*Coming through the Rye.*

Coming through the rye, poor body,  
 Coming through the rye,  
 She draiglet a’ her petticoatie,  
 Coming through the rye.  
 Jenny’s a’ wat, poor body,  
 Jenny’s seldom dry ;  
 She draiglet a’ her petticoatie,  
 Coming through the rye.

Gin a body meet a body  
 Coming through the rye,  
 Gin a body kiss a body,  
 Need a body cry ?

Gin a body meet a body  
 Coming through the glen,  
 Gin a body kiss a body,  
 Need the world ken ?

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#### YOUNG JAMIE, PRIDE OF A’ THE PLAIN.

TUNE—*The Carlin o’ the Glen.*

Young Jamie, pride of a’ the plain,  
 Sae gallant and sae gay a swain ;  
 Through a’ our lasses he did rove,  
 And reigned resistless king of love :

But now wi' sighs and starting tears,  
He strays amang the woods and briers ;  
Or in the glens and rocky caves  
He sad complaining dowie raves :

I wha sae late did range and rove,  
And changed with every moon my love,  
I little thought the time was near,  
Repentance I should buy sae dear.  
The slighted maids my torment see,  
And laugh at a' the pangs I dree ;  
While she, my cruel, scornfu' fair,  
Forbids me e'er to see her mair !

suffer

## THE LASS OF ECCLEFECHAN.

TUNE—*Jacky Latin.*

Gat ye me, O gat ye me,  
O gat ye me wi' naething ;  
Rock and reel, and spinnin' wheel,  
A mickle quarter basin.  
Bye attour, my gutcher has  
A heigh house and a laigh ane,  
A' forbye my bonnie sel',  
The toss of Ecclefechan.

grandsire

O haud your tongue now, Luckie Laing ;  
O haud your tongue and jauner ;  
I held the gate till you I met,  
Syne I began to wander :  
I tint my whistle and my sang,  
I tint my peace and pleasure ;  
But your green graff, now, Luckie Laing,  
Wad airt me to my treasure.

prattle

lost

direct

## THE CARDIN' O'T.

TUNE—*Salt-fish and Dumplings.*

I coft a stane o' haslock woo',  
To make a coat to Johnuy o't ;  
For Johnny is my only jo ;  
I loe him best of ony yet.  
The cardin' o't, the spinnin' o't,  
The warpin' o't, the winnin' o't ;  
When ilka ell cost me a groat,  
The tailor staw the lynin' o't.

For though his locks be lyart gray,  
 And though his brow be beld aboon;  
 Yet I hae seen him on a day,  
 The pride of a' the parishen.

Among the songs contributed for Johnson's fifth volume, and which appeared in it, was one entitled *The Lass that made the Bed to me*. Burns had found a rude and licentious old ballad under this title, had put it through his refining alembic, and brought it out a fine rich narrative song, but still too warm in its colouring for modern delicacy. He afterwards still further purified it, as follows:—

THE LASS THAT MADE THE BED TO ME.

TUNE—*The Peacock.*

When winter's wind was blawing cauld,  
 As to the north I bent my way,  
 The mirksome night did me enfauld,  
 I knew na where to lodge till day.

A charming girl I chanced to meet,  
 Just in the middle o' my care,  
 And kindly she did me invite  
 Her father's humble cot to share.

Her hair was like the gowd sae fine,  
 Her teeth were like the ivorie,  
 Her cheeks like lilies dipt in wine,  
 The lass that made the bed to me.

Her bosom was the drifted snaw,  
 Her limbs like marble fair to see;  
 A finer form nane ever saw  
 Than hers that made the bed to me.

She made the bed baith lang and braid,  
 Wi' twa white hands she spread it down,  
 She bade ' Guid-night,' and smiling said :  
 ' I hope ye'll sleep baith saft and soun'?

Upon the morrow, when I raise,  
 I thanked her for her courtesie ;  
 A blush cam o'er the comely face  
 Of her that made the bed for me.

I clasped her waist and kissed her syne ;  
 The tear stude twinkling in her ee ;  
 ' O dearest maid, gin ye'll be mine,  
 Ye aye soll mak the bed to me.'

## THE HIGHLAND LADDIE.

TUNE—*If thou'lt play me fair play.*

The bonniest lad that e'er I saw,  
 Bonnie laddie, Highland laddie,  
 Wore a plaid, and was fu' braw,  
 Bonnie Highland laddie.  
 On his head a bonnet blue,  
 Bonnie laddie, Highland laddie;  
 His royal heart was firm and true,  
 Bonnie Highland laddie.

Trumpets sound, and cannons roar,  
 Bonnie lassie, Lowland lassie;  
 And a' the hills wi' echoes roar,  
 Bonnie Lowland lassie.  
 Glory, honour, now invite,  
 Bonnie lassie, Lowland lassie,  
 For freedom and my king to fight,  
 Bonnie Lowland lassie.

The sun a backward course shall take  
 Bonnie laddie, Highland laddie,  
 Ere aught thy manly courage shake,  
 Bonnie Highland laddie.  
 Go ! for yourself procure renown,  
 Bonnie laddie, Highland laddie;  
 And for your lawful king his crown,  
 Bonnie Highland laddie.

[‘Compiled by Burns from some Jacobite verses, entitled *The Highland Lad and the Lowland Lassie*.’—*Stenhouse.*]

## SAE FAR AW A.

TUNE—*Dalkeith Maiden Bridge.*

O sad and heavy should I part,  
 But for her sake sae far awa;  
 Unknowing what my way may thwart,  
 My native land sae far awa.  
 Thou that of a' things Maker art,  
 That formed this Fair sae far awa,  
 Gie body strength, and I'll ne'er start  
 At this my way sae far awa.

How true is love to pure desert,  
So love to her sae far awa;  
And nought can heal my bosom's smart,  
While, oh, she is sae far awa.  
None other love, nae other dart,  
I feel, but hers sae far awa;  
But fairer never touched a heart,  
Than hers, the Fair sae far awa.

## I'LL AYE CA' IN BY YON TOWN.

I'll aye ca' in by yon town,  
And by yon garden green again;  
I'll aye ca' in by yon town,  
And see my bonnie Jean again.

There's nane sall ken, there's nane sall guess,  
What brings me back the gate again,  
But she my fairest faithfu' lass,  
And stowlins we sall meet again.

She'll wander by the aiken tree,  
When trystin' time draws near again;  
And when her lovely form I see,  
O haith, she's doubly dear again.

## BANNOCKS O' BARLEY.

**TUNE—*The Killogie.***

Bannocks o' bear-meal,  
Bannocks o' barley;  
Here's to the Highlandman's  
Bannocks o' barley!  
Wha in a brulzie  
Will first cry a parley?  
Never the lads wi'  
The bannocks o' barley!

Bannocks o' bear-meal,  
Bannocks o' barley;  
Here's to the lads wi'  
The bannocks o' barley!  
Wha in his wae-days  
Were loyal to Charlie?—  
Wha but the lads wi'  
The bannocks o' barley?

[Formed by Burns on the basis of a Jacobite song.]

## IT WAS A' FOR OUR RIGHTFU' KING.

TUNE—*It was a' for our rightfu' King.*

It was a' for our rightfu' king  
We left fair Scotland's strand;  
It was a' for our rightfu' king  
We e'er saw Irish land,  
    My dear;  
We e'er saw Irish land.

Now a' is done that men can do,  
    And a' is done in vain;  
My love and native land farewell,  
For I maun cross the main,  
    My dear;  
For I maun cross the main.

He turned him right, and round about  
Upon the Irish shore;  
And ga'e his bridle-reins a shake,  
With adieu for evermore,  
    My dear;  
With adieu for evermore.

The sodger from the wars returns,  
The sailor frae the main;  
But I hae parted frae my love,  
Never to meet again,  
    My dear;  
Never to meet again.

When day is gane, and night is come,  
And a' folk bound to sleep;  
I think on him that's far awa',  
The lee-lang night, and weep,  
    My dear;  
The lee-lang night, and weep.

[The authorship of this song may be doubted. Allan Cunningham was of opinion, that Burns 'rather beautified and amended some ancient strain which he had discovered, than wrote it wholly from his own heart and fancy.' See confirmation of this in *Notes to Johnson's Museum*, by Mr David Laing.]

## THE HIGHLAND WIDOW'S LAMENT.

Oh, I am come to the low countrie,  
Och-on, och-on, och-rie!  
Without a penny in my purse,  
To buy a meal to me.

It was na sae in the Highland hills,  
 Och-on, och-on, och-rie !  
 Nae woman in the country wide  
 Sae happy was as me.

For then I had a score o' kye,  
 Och-on, och-on, och-rie !  
 Feeding on yon hills so high,  
 And giving milk to me.

And there I had threescore o' yowes,  
 Och-on, och-on, och-rie !  
 Skipping on yon bonnie knowes,  
 And casting woo' to me.

I was the happiest of the clan,  
 Sair, sair may I repine ;  
 For Donald was the bravest lad,  
 And Donald he was mine.

Till Charlie Stewart cam at last,  
 Sae far to set us free ;  
 My Donald's arm was wanted then,  
 For Scotland and for me.

Their waefu' fate what need I tell ?  
 Right to the wrang did yield :  
 My Donald and his country fell  
 Upon Culloden's field.

Oh, I am come to the low countrie,  
 Och-on, och-on, och-rie !  
 Nae woman in the world wide  
 Sae wretched now as me.

[‘This pathetic ballad was wholly composed by Burns for the *Museum*, unless we except the exclamation: “Och-on, och-on, och-rie!” which appears in the old song composed on the massacre of Glencoe, inserted in the first volume of the *Museum*.’ —*Stenhouse.*]

#### O STEER HER UP.

**TUNE—***O steer her up, and haud her gaun.*

[The first four lines of this song are part of an old ditty.]

O steer her up and haud her gaun—  
 Her mother's at the mill, jo ;  
 And gin she winna take a man,  
 E'en let her take her will, jo :

First shore her wi' a kindly kiss,  
And ca' another gill, jo ;  
And gin she take the thing amiss,  
E'en let her flyte her fill, jo.

O steer her up, and be na blate,  
And gin she take it ill, jo,  
Then lea'e the lassie till her fate,  
And time nae langer spill, jo :  
Ne'er break your heart for ae rebute,  
But think upon it still, jo ;  
Then gin the lassie winna do't,  
Ye'll fin' anither will, jo.

threaten

scold

bashful

## WEE WILLIE GRAY.

Wee Willie Gray, and his leather wallet,  
Peel a willow-wand, to be him boots and jacket ;  
The rose upon the brier will be him trowse and doublet,  
The rose upon the brier will be him trowse and doublet.

Wee Willie Gray and his leather wallet,  
Twice a lilie flower will be him sark and cravat ;  
Feathers of a flie wad feather up his bonnet,  
Feathers of a flie wad feather up his bonnet.

[Written by Burns in imitation, and to the tune, of an old nursery-song.]

## AYE MY WIFE SHE DANG ME.

TUNE—*My Wife she dang me.*

O aye my wife she dang me,  
And aft my wife did bang me,  
If ye gie a woman a' her will,  
Guid faith, she'll soon o'ergang ye.  
On peace and rest my mind was bent,  
And fool I was I married ;  
But never honest man's intent  
As cursedly miscarried.

beat

Some sa'r o' comfort still at last,  
When a' my days are done, man ;  
My pains o' hell on earth are past,  
I'm sure o' bliss aboon, man.  
O aye my wife she dang me,  
And aft my wife did bang me,  
If ye gie a woman a' her will,  
Guid faith, she'll soon o'ergang ye.

## O GUID ALE COMES.

O guid ale comes and guid ale goes,  
 Guid ale gars me sell my hose,  
 Sell my hose and pawn my shoon;  
 Guid ale keeps my heart aboon.

I had sax owsen in a pleugh,  
 They drew a' weel eneugh,  
 I selt them a' just ane by ane;  
 Guid ale keeps my heart aboon.

## ROBIN SHURE IN HAIRST.

## CHORUS.

Robin shure in hairst,  
 I shure wi' him;  
 Fient a heuk had I,  
 Yet I stack by him.

I gaed up to Dunse,  
 To warp a wab o' plaiden;  
 At his daddie's yett,  
 Wha met me but Robin?

Was na Robin bauld,  
 Though I was a cotter,  
 Played me sic a trick,  
 And me the ells's dochter?

Robin promised me  
 A' my winter vittle;  
 Fient haet he had but three  
 Goose feathers and a whittle.

## SWEETEST MAY.

Sweetest May, let love inspire thee;  
 Take a heart which he desires thee;  
 As thy constant slave regard it;  
 For its faith and truth reward it.

Proof o' shot to birth or money,  
 Not the wealthy but the bonnie;  
 Not high-born, but noble-minded,  
 In love's silken band can bind it.

## THERE WAS A BONNIE LASS.

There was a bonnie lass, and a bonnie, bonnie lass,  
And she loed her bonnie laddie dear,  
Till war's loud alarms tore her laddie frae her arms,  
Wi' monie a sigh and a tear.

Over sea, over shore, where the cannons loudly roar,  
He still was a stranger to fear ;  
And nought could him quail, or his bosom assail,  
But the bonnie lass he loed sae dear.

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## CROWDIE.

O that I had ne'er been married,  
I wad never had nae care ;  
Now I've gotten wife and bairns,  
And they cry crowdie evermair.  
Ance crowdie, twice crowdie,  
Three times crowdie in a day ;  
Gin ye crowdie ony mair,  
Ye'll crowdie a' my meal away.

Waefu' want and hunger fley me,  
Glowrin' by the hallan en' ;  
Sair I fecht them at the door,  
But aye I'm eerie they come ben.

[‘The first verse of this song is old; the second was written by Burns.—*Stenhouse.*]

## NOTES TO JOHNSON'S SCOTS MUSICAL MUSEUM.

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[In the latter part of his life, Burns procured an interleaved copy of *Johnson's Scots Musical Museum*, for the purpose of concentrating in that place his remarks on Scottish songs and airs, and all that he knew of their authors. The copy thus annotated he presented to Captain Riddel of Glenriddel, whose niece, Eliza Bayley, of Manchester, latterly possessed it. Most of the notes are merely indications of an author's name, or of a simple fact respecting the locality or origin of the song. Such of them as possess any general interest are here presented.]

### O OPEN THE DOOR, LORD GREGORY.

It is somewhat singular, that in Lanark, Renfrew, Ayr, Wigton, Kirkcudbright, and Dumfries shires, there is scarcely an old song or tune which, from the title, &c., can be guessed to belong to, or be the production of, these counties. This, I conjecture, is one of these very few; as the ballad, which is a long one, is called, both by tradition and in printed collections, *The Lass of Lochryan*, which I take to be Lochryan, in Galloway.

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### CLOUT THE CALDRON.

A tradition is mentioned in the *Bee*, that the second Bishop Chisholm, of Dumblane, used to say, that if he were going to be hanged, nothing would soothe his mind so much by the way as to hear *Clout the Caldron* played.

I have met with another tradition, that the old song to this tune

Hae ye ony pots or pans,  
Or ony broken chanlers?

was composed on one of the Kenmure family, in the cavalier times, and alluded to an amour he had, while under hiding, in the disguise of an itinerant tinker. The air is also known by the name of *The Blacksmith and his Apron*, which, from the rhythm, seems to have been a line of some old song to the tune.

## SAW YE MY PEGGY?

This charming song is much older, and, indeed, superior to Ramsay's verses, *The Toast*, as he calls them. There is another set of the words, much older still, and which I take to be the original one ; but though it has a very great deal of merit, it is not quite ladies' reading.

The original words, for they can scarcely be called verses, seem to be as follow—a song familiar from the cradle to every Scottish ear :—

Saw ye my Maggie,  
Saw ye my Maggie,  
Saw ye my Maggie  
Linkin' o'er the lea ?

High kilted was she,  
High kilted was she,  
High kilted was she,  
Her coat aboon her knee, &c.

Though it by no means follows that the silliest verses to an air must, for that reason, be the original song, yet I take this ballad, of which I have quoted part, to be old verses. The two songs in Ramsay, one of them evidently his own, are never to be met with in the fireside circle of our peasantry ; while that which I take to be the old song is in every shepherd's mouth. Ramsay, I suppose, had thought the old verses unworthy of a place in his collection.

## THE FLOWERS OF EDINBURGH.

This song is one of the many effusions of Scots Jacobitism. The title, *Flowers of Edinburgh*, has no manner of connection with the present verses ; so I suspect there has been an older set of words, of which the title is all that remains.

By the by, it is singular enough that the Scottish Muses were all Jacobites. I have paid more attention to every description of Scots songs than perhaps anybody living has done, and I do not recollect one single stanza, or even the title, of the most trifling Scots air, which has the least panegyrical reference to the families of Nassau or Brunswick, while there are hundreds satirising them. This may be thought no panegyric on the Scots poets, but I mean it as such. For myself, I would always take it as a compliment to have it said that my heart ran before my head—and surely the gallant though unfortunate house of Stuart, the kings of our fathers for so many heroic ages, is a theme . . . .

## FYE, GAE RUB HER O'ER WI' STRAE.

It is self-evident, that the first four lines of this song are part of a song more ancient than Ramsay's beautiful verses which are annexed to them. As music is the language of nature ; and poetry, particularly songs, are always less or more localised (if I may be allowed the verb) by some of the modifications of time and place, this is the reason why so many of our Scots airs have outlived their original, and perhaps many subsequent sets of verses, except a single name, or phrase, or sometimes one or two lines, simply to distinguish the tunes by.

To this day, among people who know nothing of Ramsay's verses, the following is the song, and all the song that ever I heard :—

Gin ye meet a bonnie lassie,  
Gie her a kiss and let her gae;  
But gin ye meet a dirty hizzie,  
Fye, gae rub her o'er wi' strae.

Fye, gae rub her, rub her, rub her,  
Fye, gae rub her o'er wi' strae:  
And gin ye meet a dirty hizzie,  
Fye, gae rub her o'er wi' strae.

## THE LAST TIME I CAME O'ER THE MUIR.

[The last time I came o'er the muir,  
I left my love behind me;  
Ye gods, what pains do I endure,  
When saft ideas mind me, &c.]

Ramsay found the first line of this song, which had been preserved as the title of the charming air,<sup>1</sup> and then composed the rest of the verses to suit that line. This has always a finer effect than composing English words, or words with an idea foreign to the spirit of the old title. Where old titles of songs convey any idea at all, it will generally be found to be quite in the spirit of the air.

## HIGHLAND LADDIE.

As this was a favourite theme with our later Scottish Muses, there are several airs and songs of that name. That which I take to be the oldest, is to be found in the *Musical Museum*, beginning, 'I hae been at Crookie-den.' One reason for my thinking so is, that Oswald has it in his collection by the name of *The Auld Highland Laddie*. It is also known by the name of *Jinglan Johnnie*, which is a well-

<sup>1</sup> [The title of this air in the Skene manuscript, circa 1620, is *A lace that I cam o'er the Muir, and left my Love behind me.*]

known song of four or five stanzas, and seems to be an earlier song than Jacobite times. As a proof of this, it is little known to the peasantry by the name of *Highland Laddie*, while everybody knows *Jinglan Johnnie*. The song begins—

Jinglan John, the meikle man,  
He met wi' a lass was blithe and bonnie.

Another *Highland Laddie* is also in the *Museum*, vol. v., which I take to be Rainsay's original, as he has borrowed the chorus, *O my bonnie Highland Lad*, &c. It consists of three stanzas, besides the chorus, and has humour in its composition—it is an excellent, but somewhat licentious song. It begins—

As I cam o'er Cairney-Mount,  
And down amang the blooming heather.

This air, and the common *Highland Laddie*, seem only to be different sets.

Another *Highland Laddie*, also in the *Museum*, vol. v., is the tune of several Jacobite fragments. One of these old songs to it, only exists, as far as I know, in these four lines—

Whare hae ye been a' day,  
Bonnie laddie, Highland laddie?  
Down the back o' Bell's brae,  
Courtin' Maggie, courtin' Maggie.

Another of this name is Dr Arne's beautiful air, called the new *Highland Laddie*.

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#### FAIREST OF THE FAIR.

It is too barefaced to take Dr Percy's charming song, and, by means of transposing a few English words into Scots, to offer to pass it for a Scots song. I was not acquainted with the editor until the first volume was nearly finished, else, had I known in time, I would have prevented such an impudent absurdity.

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#### THE BLAITHRIE O'T.<sup>1</sup>

The following is a set of this song, which was the earliest song I remember to have got by heart. When a child, an old woman sang it to me, and I picked it up, every word, at first hearing:—

O Willy, weel I mind, I lent you my hand  
To sing you a song whieh you did me command;  
But my memory's so bad, I had almost forgot  
That you called it the gear and the blaithrie o't.

<sup>1</sup> ['Shame fall the gear and the blad'ry o't,' is the turn of an old Scottish song, spoken when a young handsome girl marries an old man upon the account of his wealth.—*Kelly's Scots Proverbs*, p. 296.]

I'll not sing about confusion, delusion, or pride,  
 I'll sing about a laddie was for a virtuous bride;  
 For virtue is an ornament that time will never rot,  
 And prefcrable to gear and the blaithrie o't.

Though my lassie hae nae scarlets or silks to put on,  
 We envy not the greatest that sits upon the throne;  
 I wad rather hae my lassie, though she cam in her smock,  
 Than a princess wi' the gear and the blaithrie o't.

Though we hae nae horses or menzie at command,  
 We will toil on our foot, and we'll work wi' our hand;  
 And when wearied without rest, we'll find it sweet in any spot,  
 And we'll value not the gear and the blaithrie o't.

If we hae ony babies, we'll count them as lent;  
 Hae we less, hae we mair, we will aye be content;  
 For they say they hae mair pleasure that wins but a groat,  
 Than the miser wi' his gear and the blaithrie o't.

I'll not meddle wi' th' affairs o' the kirk or the queen;  
 They're nae matters for a sang, let them sink let them swim;  
 On your kirk I'll ne'er encroach, but I'll hold it still remote,  
 Sae tak this for the gear and the blaithrie o't.

#### MAY EVE, OR KATE OF ABERDEEN.

*Kate of Aberdeen* is, I believe, the work of poor Cunningham the player, of whom the following anecdote, though told before, deserves a recital:—A fat dignitary of the Church coming past Cunningham one Sunday, as the poor poet was busy plying a fishing-rod in some stream near Durham, his native county, his reverence reprimanded Cunningham very severely for such an occupation on such a day. The poor poet, with that inoffensive gentleness of manners which was his peculiar characteristic, replied, that he hoped God and his reverence would forgive his seeming profanity of that sacred day, ‘as he had no dinner to eat but what lay at the bottom of that pool!’ This, Mr Woods, the player, who knew Cunningham well, and esteemed him much, assured me was true.

#### TWEED-SIDE.

[What beauties doth Flora disclose!  
 How sweet are her smiles upon Tweed!  
 Yet Mary's, still sweeter than those,  
 Both nature and fancy exceed.  
 Nor daisy, nor sweet blushing rose,  
 Nor all the gay flowers of the field,  
 Nor Tweed gliding gently through those,  
 Such beauty and pleasure does yield, &c.]

In Ramsay's *Tea-table Miscellany*, he tells us that about thirty of

the songs in that publication were the works of some young gentlemen of his acquaintance, which songs are marked with the letters D. C. &c. Old Mr Tytler of Woodhouselee, the worthy and able defender of the beauteous Queen of Scots, told me that the songs marked C. in the *Tea-table*, were the composition of a Mr Crawford, of the house of Achnames, who was afterwards unfortunately drowned coming from France. As Tytler was most intimately acquainted with Allan Ramsay, I think the anecdote may be depended on. Of consequence, the beautiful song of *Tweed-side* is Mr Crawford's, and, indeed, does great honour to his poetical talents. He was a Robert Crawford; the Mary he celebrates was a Mary Stewart, of the Castle-Milk family, afterwards married to a Mr John Ritchie.<sup>1</sup>

I have seen a song, calling itself the original *Tweed-side*, and said to have been composed by a Lord Yester.<sup>2</sup> It consisted of two stanzas, of which I still recollect the first—

When Maggie and I was acquaint,  
I carried my noddle fu' hie ;  
Nae lintwhite on a' the green plain,  
Nor gowdspink sae happy as me :  
But I saw her sae fair, and I loed :  
I wooed, btt I cam nae great speed ;  
So now I maun wander abroad,  
And lay my banes far frae the Tweed.

---

#### THERE'S NAE LUCK ABOUT THE HOUSE.

This is one of the most beautiful songs in the Scots or any other language. The two lines—

And will I see his face again ?  
And will I hear him speak ?

as well as the two preceding ones, are unequalled almost by anything I ever heard or read ; and the lines—

The present moment is our ain,  
The neist we never saw,

are worthy of the first poet. It is long posterior to Ramsay's days. About the year 1771, or '72, it came first on the streets as a ballad, and, I suppose, the composition of the song was not much anterior to that period.

<sup>1</sup> See notes on this subject in the new edition of *Johnson's Musical Museum*. Mr Robert Crawford, author of the beautiful pastoral songs, *Tweedside*, and the *Bush aboon Traquair*, was a younger son of Patrick Crawford, third son of David Crawford of Drumsoy. He died in 1732, in the prime of life, unmarried. Burns has made a mistake in stating that he was of the house of Auchnames, and also in giving Mary Stewart as his heroine. *See below.*

<sup>2</sup> Second Marquis of Tweeddale. He died in 1713, aged sixty-eight.

## MARY SCOTT, THE FLOWER OF YARROW.

Mr Robertson, in his statistical account of the parish of Selkirk, says, that Mary Scott, the Flower of Yarrow, was descended from the Dryhope, and married into the Harden family. Her daughter was married to a predecessor of the present Sir Francis Elliot of Stobs, and of the late Lord Heathfield.

There is a circumstance in their contract of marriage that merits attention, and it strongly marks the predatory spirit of the times. The father-in-law agrees to keep his daughter for some time after the marriage, for which the son-in-law binds himself to give him the profits of the first Michaelmas moon!<sup>1</sup>

## THE BONNIE BRUCKET LASSIE.

[The bonnie brucket lassie,  
She's blue beneath the een;  
She was the fairest lassie  
That dancèd on the green;  
  
A lad he loed her dearly,  
She did his love return;  
But he his vows has broken,  
And left her for to mourn, &c.]

The two first lines of this song are all of it that is old. The rest of the song, as well as those songs in the *Museum* marked T. are the works of an obscure, tippling, but extraordinary body of the name of Tytler, commonly known by the name of Balloon Tytler, from his having projected a balloon—a mortal who, though he drudges about Edinburgh as a common printer, with leaky shoes, a sky-lighted hat, and knee-buckles as unlike as George-by-the-grace-of-God, and Solomon-the-son-of-David, yet that same unknown drunken mortal is author and compiler of three-fourths of Elliot's pompous *Encyclopædia Britannica*, which he composed at half a guinea a week!

<sup>1</sup> The song to which Burns appended this note, was one by Robert Crawford, celebrating, not the Mary Scott of predatory times, who bore the name of the *Flower of Yarrow*, but a descendant of hers, who flourished in the early part of the eighteenth century, Miss Mary Lilius Scott, daughter of Walter Scott, Esq., of Harden, and who was also styled the *Flower of Yarrow*. This lady was the true 'Mary' of Tweedside.

## CROMLET'S LILT.

[Since all thy vows, false maid,  
 Are blown to air,  
 And my poor heart betrayed  
 To sad despair,  
 Into some wilderness,  
 My grief I will express,  
 And thy hard-heartedness,  
 O cruel fair!]]

The following interesting account of this plaintive dirge was communicated to Mr Riddel by Alexander Fraser Tytler, Esq., of Woodhouselee:—

'In the latter end of the sixteenth century, the Chisholms were proprietors of the estate of Cromlix—now possessed by the Drummonds. The eldest son of that family was very much attached to a daughter of Stirling of Ardoch, commonly known by the name of Fair Helen of Ardoch.

'At that time, the opportunities of meeting betwixt the sexes were more rare, consequently more sought after than now; and the Scottish ladies, far from priding themselves on extensive literature, were thought sufficiently book-learned if they could make out the Scriptures in their mother-tongue. Writing was entirely out of the line of female education. At that period, the most of our young men of family sought a fortune, or found a grave in France. Cromlix, when he went abroad to the war, was obliged to leave the management of his correspondence with his mistress to a lay-brother of the monastery of Dumblane, in the immediate neighbourhood of Cromlix, and near Ardoch. This man, unfortunately, was deeply sensible of Helen's charms. He artfully prepossessed her with stories to the disadvantage of Cromlix, and, by misinterpreting or keeping up the letters and messages intrusted to his care, he entirely irritated both. All connection was broken off betwixt them: Helen was inconsolable, and Cromlix has left behind him, in the ballad called *Cromlet's Lilt*, a proof of the elegance of his genius, as well as the steadiness of his love.

'When the artful monk thought time had sufficiently softened Helen's sorrow, he proposed himself as a lover. Helen was obdurate: but at last, overcome by the persuasions of her brother, with whom she lived, and who, having a family of thirty-one children, was probably very well pleased to get her off his hands, she submitted, rather than consented, to the ceremony; but there her compliance ended: and, when forcibly put into bed, she started quite frantic from it, screaming out, that after three gentle taps on the wainscot, at the bed-head, she heard Cromlix's voice, crying: "Helen, Helen, mind me!" Cromlix soon after coming home, the treachery of the confidant was discovered, her marriage annulled, and Helen became Lady Cromlix.'

*N.B.*—Marg. Murray, mother to these thirty-one children, was

daughter to Murray of Strewn, one of the seventeen sons of Tullybardine, and whose youngest son, commonly called the Tutor of Ardoch, died in the year 1715, aged 111 years.

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## LEWIS GORDON.

[Oh! send Lewie Gordon hame,  
And the lad I maunna name;  
Though his back be at the wa',  
Here's to him that's far awa'  
O hon! my Highlandman,  
O my bonnie Highlandman!  
Weel would I my true-love ken,  
Amang ten thousand Highlandmen, &c.]

This air is a proof how one of our Scots tunes comes to be composed out of another. I have one of the earliest copies of the song, and it has prefixed,

Tune of *Tarry Woo*.

Of which tune a different set has insensibly varied into a different air. To a Scots critic, the pathos of the line,

'Though his back be at the wa',

must be very striking. It needs not a Jacobite prejudice to be affected with this song.

The supposed author of *Lewis Gordon* was a Mr Geddes, priest, at Shenvale, in the Enzie.

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## TRANENT-MUIR.

[The Chevalier, being void of fear,  
Did march up Birsley Brae, man,  
And through Tranent, ere he did stent,  
As fast as he could gae, man, &c.<sup>1</sup>]

*Tranent-Muir* was composed by a Mr Skirving, a very worthy, respectable farmer near Haddington. I have heard the anecdote often, that Lieut. Smith, whom he mentions in the ninth stanza, came to Haddington after the publication of the song, and sent a challenge to Skirving to meet him at Haddington, and answer for the unworthy manner in which he had noticed him in his song. 'Gang away back,' said the honest farmer, 'and tell Mr Smith that I hae nae leisure to come to Haddington; but tell him to come here, and I'll tak a look o' him, and if I think I'm fit to fecht him, I'll fecht him; and if no, I'll do as he did—I'll rin awa.'

<sup>1</sup> [The subject of this song is the battle of Preston, fought September 1745, between the government forces under General Cope, and the Highland army under Prince Charles Stuart.]

## STREPHION AND LYDIA.

[All lonely on the sultry beach,  
 Expiring Strephon lay,  
 No hand the cordial draught to reach,  
 Nor cheer the gloomy way.  
 Ill-fated youth ! no parent nigh,  
 To catch thy fleeting breath,  
 No bride to fix thy swimming eye,  
 Or smooth the face of death.

Far distant from the mournful scene,  
 Thy parents sit at ease,  
 Thy Lydia rifles all the plain,  
 And all the spring to please.  
 Ill-fated youth ! by fault of friend,  
 Not force of foe depressed,  
 Thou fall'st, alas ! thyself, thy kind,  
 Thy country, unredressed !]

The following account of this song I had from Dr Blacklock :—

The Strephon and Lydia mentioned in the song were perhaps the loveliest couple of their time. The gentleman was commonly known by the name of Beau Gibson. The lady was the ‘Gentle Jean’ celebrated somewhere in Hamilton of Bangour’s poems. Having frequently met at public places, they had formed a reciprocal attachment, which their friends thought dangerous, as their resources were by no means adequate to their tastes and habits of life. To elude the bad consequences of such a connection, Strephon was sent abroad with a commission, and perished in Admiral Vernon’s expedition to Carthagena.

The author of the song was William Wallace, Esq., of Cairnhill, in Ayrshire.

## DUMBARTON DRUMS.

[Dumbarton’s drums beat bonnie, O,  
 When they mind me o’ my dear Johnnie, O.  
 How happy am I,  
 With my soldier sitting by,  
 When he kisses and blesses his Annie, O, &c.]

This is the last of the West Highland airs;<sup>1</sup> and from it over the whole tract of country to the confines of Tweed-side, there is hardly a tune or song that one can say has taken its origin from any place or transaction in that part of Scotland. The oldest Ayrshire reel is *Stewarton Lasses*, which was made by the father of the present Sir

<sup>1</sup> [Burns argues, that it is a west country air, from its reference to Dumbarton; but the probability is, that the drums alluded to were those of Dumbarton’s regiment—namely, the Earl of Dumbarton.]

Walter Montgomery Cunningham, *alias* Lord Lysle; since which period there has indeed been local music in that county in great plenty. *Johnnie Faa* is the only old song which I could ever trace as belonging to the extensive county of Ayr.

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#### KIRK WAD LET ME BE.

[I am a puir silly auld man,  
And hirpling o'er a tree,  
Yet fain, fain kiss wad I,  
An the kirk wad let me be, &c.]

Tradition in the western parts of Scotland tells that this old song, of which there are still three stanzas extant, once saved a Covenanting clergyman out of a scrape. It was a little prior to the Revolution, a period when being a Scots Covenanter was being a felon, that one of their clergy, who was at that very time hunted by the merciless soldiery, fell in by accident with a party of the military. The soldiers were not exactly acquainted with the person of the reverend gentleman of whom they were in search; but from suspicious circumstances, they fancied that they had got one of that cloth and opprobrious persuasion among them in the person of this stranger 'Mass John,' to extricate himself, assumed a freedom of manners very unlike the gloomy strictness of his sect; and among other convivial exhibitions, sang—and some traditions say, composed on the spur of the occasion—*Kirk wad let me be*, with such effect, that the soldiers swore he was a d—— honest fellow, and that it was impossible *he* could belong to those hellish conventicles, and so gave him his liberty.

The first stanza of this song, a little altered, is a favourite kind of dramatic interlude acted at country-weddings, in the south-west parts of the kingdom. A young fellow is dressed up like an old beggar; a peruke, commonly made of carded tow, represents hoary locks; an old bonnet; a ragged plaid, or surtout, bound with a straw-rope for a girdle; a pair of old shoes, with straw-ropes twisted round his ankles, as is done by shepherds in snowy weather: his face they disguise as like wretched old age as they can. In this plight he is brought into the wedding-house, frequently to the astonishment of strangers, who are not in the secret, and begins to sing—

[Oh, I am a silly auld man,  
My name it is auld Glenae,<sup>1</sup> &c.]

He is asked to drink, and by and by to dance, which, after some uncouth excuses, he is prevailed on to do, the fiddler playing the tune which here is commonly called *Auld Glenae*: in short, he is all

<sup>1</sup> Glenae, on the small river Ae, in Annandale; the seat and designation of an ancient branch, and the present representative, of the gallant and unfortunate Dalzels of Carnwath. (This is the Author's note.)

the time so plied with liquor, that he is understood to get intoxicated, and, with all the ridiculous gesticulations of an old drunken beggar, he dances and staggers until he falls on the floor; yet still in all his riot, nay, in his rolling and tumbling on the floor, with some other drunken motions of his body, he beats time to the music, till at last he is supposed to be carried out dead drunk.

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## TUNE YOUR FIDDLERS.

[Tune your fiddles, tune them sweetly,  
Play the Marquis' reel discreetly,  
Here are we a band completely,  
Fitted to be jolly.  
Some, my boys, be blithe and gaucy,  
Every youngster choose his lassie,  
Dance wi' life, and be not saucy,  
Shy nor melancholy, &c.]

This song was composed by the Rev. John Skinner, Nonjuror Clergyman at Linshart, near Peterhead. He is likewise author of *Tullochgorum, Ewie wi' the Crooked Horn, John o' Badenyonnd*, &c.; and what is of still more consequence, he is one of the worthiest of mankind. He is the author of an ecclesiastical history of Scotland. The air is by Mr Marshall, butler to the Duke of Gordon, the first composer of strathspeys of the age. I have been told by somebody, who had it of Marshall himself, that he took the idea of his three most celebrated pieces, *The Marquis of Huntley's Reel*, his *Farewell*, and *Miss Admiral Gordon's Reel*, from the old air, *The German Lairdie*.

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## GIL MORICE.

This plaintive ballad ought to have been called *Child Maurice*, and not *Gil Morice*. In its present dress, it has gained immortal honour from Mr Home's taking from it the groundwork of his fine tragedy of *Douglas*. But I am of opinion, that the present ballad is a modern composition; perhaps not much above the age of the middle of the last century; at least I should be glad to see or hear of a copy of the present words prior to 1650. That it was taken from an old ballad, called *Child Maurice*, now lost, I am inclined to believe; but the present one may be classed with *Hardyknute, Kenneth, Duncan, the Laird of Woolhouselie, Lord Livingston, Binnorie, The Death of Monteith*, and many other modern productions, which have been swallowed by many readers as ancient fragments of old poems. This beautiful plaintive tune was composed by Mr M'Gibbon, the selector of a collection of Scots tunes.

In addition to the observations on *Gil Morice*, I add that of  
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the songs which Capt. Riddel mentions, *Kenneth* and *Duncan* are juvenile compositions of Mr Mackenzie, ‘The Man of Feeling.’ Mackenzie’s father shewed them in MS. to Dr Blacklock, as the productions of his son, from which the doctor rightly prognosticated that the young poet would make, in his more advanced years, a respectable figure in the world of letters.

This I had from Blacklock.

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#### TULLOCHGORUM.

[‘Come, gie’s a sang,’ Montgomery cried,  
 ‘And lay your disputes all aside;  
 What signifies’t for folks to chide  
 For what was done before them :  
 Let Whig and Tory all agree,  
 Whig and Tory, Whig and Tory,  
 Whig and Tory all agree,  
 To drop their Whig-mig-morum.  
 Let Whig and Tory all agree  
 To spend the night wi’ mirth and glee,  
 And cheerful sing alang wi’ me,  
 The reel o’ Tullochgorum,’ &c.]

This first of songs is the masterpiece of my old friend Skinner. He was passing the day at the town of Cullen, I think it was,<sup>1</sup> in a friend’s house, whose name was Montgomery. Mrs Montgomery observing, *en passant*, that the beautiful reel of *Tullochgorum* wanted words, she begged them of Mr Skinner, who gratified her wishes, and the wishes of every lover of Scottish song, in this most excellent ballad.

These particulars I had from the author’s son, Bishop Skinner, at Aberdeen.

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#### A SOUTHLAND JENNY.

[A Southland Jenny that was rightt bonnie,  
 She had for a suitor a Norlan’ Johnnie ;  
 But he was sicken a bashfu’ wooer,  
 That he could scarcely speak unto her.  
 But blinks o’ her beauty, and hopes o’ her siller,  
 Forced him at last to tell his mind till’er ;  
 ‘My dear,’ quo’ he, ‘we’ll nae longer tarry ;  
 Gin ye can love me, let’s o’er the muir and marry,’ &c.]

This is a popular Ayrshire song, though the notes were never taken down before. It, as well as many of the ballad tunes in this collection, was written from Mrs Burns’s voice.

<sup>1</sup> [In reality, the town of Ellon, in Aberdeenshire.]

## O'ER THE MOOR AMANG THE HEATHER.

[Coming through the craigs o' Kyle,  
 Amang the bonnie blooming heather,  
 There I met a bonnie lassie,  
 Keeping a' her yowes thegither.  
 O'er the moor amang the heather,  
 O'er the moor amang the heather,  
 There I met a bonnie lassie,  
 Keeping a' her yowes thegither, &c.]

This song is the composition of a Jean Glover, a girl who was not only a —, but also a thief; and, in one or other character, has visited most of the correction-houses in the West. She was born, I believe, in Kilmarnock. I took the song down from her singing, as she was strolling through the country with a sleight-of-hand blackguard.

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## THE TEARS I SHED MUST EVER FALL.

This song of genius was composed by a Miss Cranston.<sup>1</sup> It wanted four lines to make all the stanzas suit the music, which I added, and are the four first of the last stanza.

No cold approach, no altered mien,  
 Just what would make suspicion start;  
 No pause the dire extremes between,  
 He made me blest—and broke my heart!

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## BOB O' DUMBLANE.

Ramsay, as usual, has modernised this song. The original, which I learned on the spot, from my old hostess, in the principal inn there, is—

Lassie, lend me your braw hemp heckle,  
 And I'll lend you my thripplin-kame;  
 My heckle is broken, it canna be gotten,  
 And we'll gae dance the bob o' Dumblane, &c.

I insert this song to introduce the following anecdote, which I have heard well authenticated:—In the evening of the day of the battle of Dumblane (Sheriffmuir), when the action was over, a Scots officer in Argyle's army observed to his Grace, that he was afraid the rebels would give out to the world that *they* had gotten the victory. ‘Weel, weel,’ returned his Grace, alluding to the foregoing ballad, ‘if they think it be na weel bobbit, we'll bob it again.’

<sup>1</sup> [Afterwards Mrs Dugald Stewart.]

## PROSE ARTICLES UNPLACED.

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### ADDRESS OF THE SCOTCH DISTILLERS TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE WILLIAM PITT.

SIR—While pursy burgesses crowd your gate, sweating under the weight of heavy addresses, permit us, the quondam distillers in that part of Great Britain called Scotland, to approach you, not with venal approbation, but with fraternal condolence; not as what you are just now, or for some time have been, but as what, in all probability, you will shortly be. We shall have the merit of not deserting our friends in the day of their calamity, and you will have the satisfaction of perusing at least one honest address. You are well acquainted with the dissection of human nature; nor do you need the assistance of a fellow-creature's bosom to inform you, that man is always a selfish, often a perfidious being. This assertion, however the hasty conclusions of superficial observation may doubt of it, or the raw inexperience of youth may deny it, those who make the fatal experiment we have done, will feel. You are a statesman, and consequently are not ignorant of the traffic of these corporation compliments. The little great man who drives the borough to market, and the very great man who buys the borough in that market, they two do the whole business; and you well know, they, likewise, have their price. With that sullen disdain which you can so well assume, rise, illustrious sir, and spurn these hireling efforts of venal stupidity. At best, they are the compliments of a man's friends on the morning of his execution: they take a decent farewell; resign you to your fate; and hurry away from your approaching hour.

If fame say true, and omens be not very much mistaken, you are about to make your exit from that world where the sun of gladness gilds the paths of prosperous men: permit us, great sir, with the sympathy of fellow-feeling, to hail your passage to the realms of ruin.

Whether the sentiment proceed from the selfishness or cowardice of mankind, is immaterial; but to point out to a child of misfortune those who are still more unhappy, is to give him some degree of positive enjoyment. In this light, sir, our downfall may be again useful to you: though not exactly in the same way, it is not perhaps the first time it has gratified your feelings. It is true, the triumph of your evil star is exceedingly spiteful. At an age when others

are the votaries of pleasure, or underlings in business, you had attained the highest wish of a British statesman; and with the ordinary date of human life, what a prospect was before you! Deeply rooted in *royal favour*, you overshadowed the land. The birds of passage which follow ministerial sunshine through every clime of political faith and manners, flocked to your branches; and the beasts of the field (the lordly possessors of hills and valleys) crowded under your shade. ‘But behold a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven, and cried aloud, and said thus: Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches; shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit; let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches!’ A blow from an unthought-of quarter, one of those terrible accidents which peculiarly mark the hand of Omnipotence, overset your career, and laid all your fancied honours in the dust. But turn your eyes, sir, to the tragic scenes of our fate. An ancient nation, that for many ages had gallantly maintained the unequal struggle for independence with her much more powerful neighbour, at last agrees to a union which should ever after make them one people. In consideration of certain circumstances, it was covenanted that the former should enjoy a stipulated alleviation in her share of the public burdens, particularly in that branch of the revenue called the Excise. This just privilege has of late given great umbrage to some interested, powerful individuals of the more potent part of the empire, and they have spared no wicked pains, under insidious pretexts, to subvert what they dared not openly to attack, from the dread which they yet entertained of the spirit of their ancient enemies.

In this conspiracy we fell; nor did we alone suffer—our country was deeply wounded. A number of (we will say) respectable individuals, largely engaged in trade, where we were not only useful, but absolutely necessary to our country in her dearest interests: we, with all that was near and dear to us, were sacrificed without remorse to the infernal deity of political expediency! We fell to gratify the wishes of dark envy, and the views of unprincipled ambition! Your foes, sir, were avowed; were too brave to take an ungenerous advantage: *you* fell in the face of day. On the contrary, our enemies, to complete our overthrow, contrived to make their guilt appear the villainy of a nation. Your downfall only drags with you your private friends and partisans: in our misery are more or less involved the most numerous and most valuable part of the community—all those who immediately depend on the cultivation of the soil, from the landlord of a province down to his lowest hind.

Allow us, sir, yet further, just to hint at another rich vein of comfort in the dreary regions of adversity—the gratulations of an approving conscience. In a certain great assembly, of which you are a distinguished member, panegyrics on your private virtues have so often wounded your delicacy, that we shall not distress you with anything on the subject. There is, however, one part of your public conduct which our feelings will not permit us to pass in

silence; our gratitude must trespass on your modesty: we mean, worthy sir, your whole behaviour to the Scots distillers. In evil hours, when obtrusive recollection presses bitterly on the sense, let that, sir, come like a healing angel, and speak the peace to your soul which the world can neither give nor take away. We have the honour to be, sir, your sympathising fellow-sufferers and grateful humble servants,

JOHN BARLEYCORN, *Præses.*

TO MR ALEXANDER FINDLATER,

SUPERVISOR OF EXCISE, DUMFRIES.

SIR—Enclosed are the two schemes. I would not have troubled you with the collector's one, but for suspicion lest it be not right. Mr Erskine promised me to make it right, if you will have the goodness to shew him how. As I have no copy of the scheme for myself, and the alterations being very considerable from what it was formerly, I hope that I shall have access to this scheme I send you when I come to face up my new books. *So much for schemes.* And that no scheme to betray a FRIEND, or mislead a STRANGER; to seduce a YOUNG GIRL, or rob a HEN-ROOST; to subvert LIBERTY, or bribe an EXCISEMAN; to disturb the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, or annoy a GOSSIPPING; to overthrow the credit of ORTHODOXY, or the authority of OLD SONGS; to oppose *your wishes*, or frustrate *my hopes*—MAY PROSPER—is the sincere wish and prayer of

R. B.

## PIECES DOUBTFULLY ATTRIBUTED TO BURNS.

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### THE HERMIT.

WRITTEN ON A MARBLE SIDEBOARD, IN THE HERMITAGE BELONGING TO THE DUKE OF ATHOLE, IN THE WOOD OF ABERFELDY.

Whoe'er thou art, these lines now reading,  
Think not, though from the world receding,  
I joy my lonely days to lead in  
    This desert drear ;  
That fell remorse a conscience bleeding  
Hath led me here.

No thought of guilt my bosom sours ;  
Free-will'd I fled from courtly bowers ;  
For well I saw in halls and towers  
    That lust and pride,  
The arch-fiend's dearest, darkest powers,  
In state preside.

I saw mankind with vice incrusted ;  
I saw that honour's sword was rusted ;  
That few for aught but folly lusted ;  
That he was still deceived who trusted  
    To love or friend ;  
And hither came, with men disgusted,  
My life to end.

In this lone cave, in garments lowly,  
Alike a foe to noisy folly,  
And brow-bent gloomy melancholy,  
    I wear away  
My life, and in my office holy  
Consume the day.

This rock my shield, when storms are blowing,  
The limpid streamlet yonder flowing  
Supplying drink, the earth bestowing  
    My simple food ;  
But few enjoy the calm I know in  
This desert wood.

Content and comfort bless me more in  
 This grot, than e'er I felt before in  
 A palace—and with thoughts still soaring  
     To God on high,  
 Each night and morn with voice imploring,  
     This wish I sigh :

‘Let me, O Lord ! from life retire,  
 Unknown each guilty worldly fire,  
 Remorse’s throb, or loose desire ;  
     And when I die,  
 Let me in this belief expire—  
     To God I fly.’

Stranger, if full of youth and riot,  
 And yet no grief has marred thy quiet,  
 Thou haply throw’st a scornful eye at  
     The hermit’s prayer—  
 But if thou hast good cause to sigh at  
     Thy fault or care ;

If thou hast known false love’s vexation,  
 Or hast been exiled from thy nation,  
 Or guilt affrights thy contemplation,  
     And makes thee pine,  
 Oh ! how must thou lament thy station,  
     And envy mine !

## THE VOWELS :

## A TALE.

’Twas where the birch and sounding thong are plied,  
 The noisy domicile of pedant pride ;  
 Where Ignorance her darkening vapour throws,  
 And Cruelty directs the thickening blows ;  
 Upon a time, Sir Abece the great,  
 In all his pedagogic powers elate,  
 His awful chair of state resolves to mount,  
 And call the trembling vowels to account.

First entered A, a grave, broad, solemn wight,  
 But, ah ! deformed, dishonest to the sight !  
 His twisted head looked backward on his way,  
 And flagrant from the scourge he grunted, ‘i !

Reluctant, E stalked in ; with piteous race  
 The justling tears ran down his honest face !

That name, that well-worn name, and all his own,  
Pale he surrenders at the tyrant's throne !  
The pedant stifles keen the Roman sound  
Not all his mongrel diphthongs ean compound ;  
And next the title following close behind,  
He to the nameless, ghastly wretch assigned.

The cobwebbed Gothic dome resounded, Y!  
In sullen vengeance, I, disdained reply:  
The pedant swung his felon cudgel round,  
And knocked the groaning vowel to the ground!

In rueful apprehension entered O,  
The wailing minstrel of despairing wo;  
Th' Inquisitor of Spain the most expert,  
Might there have learnt new mysteries of his art;  
So grim, deformed, with horrors entering, U  
His dearest friend and brother scarcely knew!

As trembling U stood staring all aghast,  
The pedant in his left hand clutched him fast,  
In helpless infants' tears he dipped his right,  
Baptised him *eu*, and kicked him from his sight.

## ON PASTORAL POETRY.

Hail Poesie! thou Nymph reserved!  
In-chase o' thec, what crowds hae swerved  
Frael common-sense, or sunk ennerved  
            'Mang heaps o' clavers;                  babbling;  
And och! ower aft thy joes hae starved,  
            Mid a' thy favours!

Say, Lassie, why thy train amang,  
While loud, the trump's heroic clang,  
And sock or buskin skelp alang  
To death or marriage,  
Scarce aye has tried the shepherd-sang  
But wi' miscarriage?

In Homer's craft Jock Milton thrives ;  
Eschylus' pen Will Shakspeare drives ;  
Wee Pope, the knurlin, 'till him rives  
Horatian fame ;  
In thy sweet sang, Barbauld, survives  
E'en Sappho's flame,

But thee, Theocritus, wha matches ?  
 They're no herd's ballats, Maro's catches ;  
 Squire Pope but busks his skinklin patches  
     O' heathen tatters :  
 I pass by hunders, nameless wretches,  
     That ape their betters.

In this braw age o' wit and lear,  
 Will name the Shepherd's whistle mair  
 Blaw sweetly in its native air  
     And rural grace ;  
 And wi' the far-famed Grecian share  
     A rival place ?

Yes ! there is ane ; a Scottish callan—  
 There's ain ; come forrit, honest Allan !  
 Thou need na jouk behint the hallan,      skull door  
     A chiel sae clever ;  
 The teeth o' time may gnaw Tantallan,  
     But thou's for ever !

Thou paints auld nature to the nines,  
 In thy sweet Caledonian lines ;  
 Nae gowden stream through myrtles twines,  
     Where Philomel,  
 While nightly breezes sweep the vines,  
     Her griefs will tell !

In gowany glens thy burnie strays,  
 Where bonnie lasses bleach their claes ;  
 Or trots by hazelly shaws and braes,  
     Wi' hawthorns grey,  
 Where blackbirds join the shepherd's lays  
     At close o' day.

Thy rural loves are nature's sel' ;  
 Nae bombast spates o' nonsense swell ;      floods  
 Nae snap conceits, but that sweet spell  
     O' witchin' love ;  
 That charm that can the strongest quell,  
     The sternest move.

## A P P E N D I X.

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### No. 13.—REPUTATION OF BURNS IN HIS LATTER YEARS.

'A bent tree is not to be drawn as a straight one; or the truth of history vanishes, and its use as a discipline of knowledge and of wisdom. Hence the representation of my friend's life is unsatisfactory. By the omission of certain portions, it might easily have been made to appear more satisfactory; but then it would have been a lie: and every lie—O that people would believe it!—is at best but a whitened sepulchre.'—*Hare's Life of Sterling*.

THE habits of Burns during his latter years in Dumfries have been the subject of much controversy, and two very decided views of the matter have been taken. We hear, on the one hand, of a life of dissipation. Dr Currie, whose wish was to speak as mildly as might be possible without calling forth exposures by the enemies of the poet, uses the expression: 'Perpetually stimulated by alcohol in one or other of its various forms.' And he adds: 'He who suffers the pollution of inebriation, how shall he escape other pollution?' Even the notice of Burns's death, which appeared in the most respectable of the Edinburgh newspapers, contains this sentence: 'The public, to whose amusement he has so largely contributed, will learn with regret, that his extraordinary endowments were accompanied with frailties which rendered them useless to himself and his family.' Heron, who wrote the first memoir of the poet's life, says: 'In Dumfries, his dissipation became still more habitual [that is, than it had been in the country]..... The morals of the town were ..... not a little corrupted, and, though a husband and a father, Burns did not escape suffering by the general contamination, in a manner which I forbear to describe.' On the other hand, strong testimonies in favour of Burns's conduct during this period have been set forth by his superior officer, Mr Alexander Findlater, and by the Reverend James Gray, who was schoolmaster to the poet's sons.

Mr Findlater says: 'My connection with Robert Burns commenced immediately after his admission into the Excise, and continued to the hour of his death. In all that time, the superintendence of his behaviour, as an officer of the revenue, was a branch of my especial province, and it may be supposed I would not be an inattentive observer of the general conduct of a man and a poet so celebrated by his countrymen. In the former capacity, he was exemplary in his attention; and was even jealous of the least imputation on his

vigilance . . . . it was not till near the end of his days that there was any falling off in this respect; and this was amply accounted for by the pressure of disease and accumulating infirmities. I will further avow, that I never saw him—which was very frequently while he lived at Ellisland, and still more so after he removed to Dumfries—but in hours of business he was quite himself, and capable of discharging the duties of his office: nor was he ever known to drink by himself, or seen to indulge in the use of liquor in a forenoon. . . . That when set down in an evening with a few friends whom he liked, he was apt to prolong the social hour beyond the bounds which prudence would dictate, is unquestionable; but in his family, I will venture to say, he was never seen otherwise than attentive and affectionate in a high degree.'

Mr Gray's testimony is to much the same purpose. He was intimate with Burns in his last years, and saw him frequently. 'It is not to be denied,' says Mr Gray, 'that he sometimes mingled with society unworthy of him. He was of a social and convivial nature. He was courted by all classes of men for the fascinating powers of his conversation, but over his social scene uncontrolled passion never presided. . . . Burns was seldom *intoxicated*. The drunkard soon becomes besotted, and is shunned even by the convivial. Had he been so, he could not long have continued the idol of every party. It came under my own view professionally, that he superintended the education of his children with a degree of care that I have never seen surpassed by any parent in any rank of life whatever. In the bosom of his family, he spent many a delightful hour in directing the studies of his eldest son, a boy of uncommon talents. I have frequently found him explaining to this youth, then not more than nine years of age, the English poets from Shakspeare to Gray, or storing his mind with examples of heroic virtue, as they live in the pages of our most celebrated English historians. I would ask any person of common candour, if employments like these are consistent with *habitual drunkenness?*'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'He was a kind and attentive father, and took great delight in spending his evenings in the cultivation of the minds of his children. Their education was the grand object of his life, and he did not, like most parents, think it sufficient to send them to public schools; he was their private instructor, and even at that early age, bestowed great pains in training their minds to habits of thought and reflection, and in keeping them pure from every form of vice. This he considered as a sacred duty, and never, to the period of his last illness, relaxed in his diligence. With his eldest son, a boy of not more than nine years of age, he had read many of the favourite poets, and some of the best historians in our language; and what is more remarkable, gave him considerable aid in the study of Latin. This boy attended the Grammar School of Dumfries, and soon attracted my notice by the strength of his talent and the ardour of his ambition. Before he had been a year at school, I thought it right to advance him a form, and he began to read Cæsar, and gave me translations of that author of such beauty as I confess surprised me. On inquiry, I found that his father made him turn over his dictionary, till he was able to translate to him the passage in such a way that he could gather the author's meaning, and that it was to him he owed that polished and forcible English with which I was so greatly struck. I have mentioned this incident merely to shew what minute attention he paid to this important branch of parental duty.'—*Letter from the Reverend James Gray to Mr Gilbert Burns.* See his edition, vol. i. Appendix, No. v.

The poet's widow was amongst the most earnest of his defenders. Whatever might have been the aberrations of Burns on some points deeply concerning conjugal peace, his amiable partner had no charge to make against him. The penitence he had himself expressed, and the invariable tenderness of his conduct towards herself, had saved him from all reprobation in that quarter. Mrs Burns always represented the convivial habits of her husband as greatly exaggerated by report. She asserted, that she had never once known him return home at night so greatly affected by liquor but that he was able, as usual, to see that the house was secure, and to take off his own clothes without assistance.

To the perplexity arising from all this conflicting testimony, the conduct of Mr Gilbert Burns adds not a little. When Dr Currie's memoir came out, the brother of the poet expressed himself as perfectly satisfied with it, and for several years he uttered no remonstrance against the admissions which it had made with respect to Robert Burns's habits. In 1816, he announced his intention of entering a defence of his brother against the unjust or exaggerated picture which Dr Currie had drawn; and when this announcement drew a somewhat indignant notice from Mr Roscoe, as the friend of the late Dr Currie, Gilbert accounted for the apparent inconsistency of his conduct by saying that, having seen little of his brother for some years, and consequently knowing little about his habits at Dumfries, he had been unable to say anything in contradiction of what Dr Currie had stated; but now, knowing from the testimony of Mr Findlater and Mr Gray that the poet had been misrepresented, he felt it to be his duty, with all grateful deference to the memory of the biographer, to vindicate his brother's memory. He acted upon this feeling of duty by publishing, in his edition of the poet's works in 1820, the letters of Mr Findlater and Mr Gray, as being all-sufficient to clear the name of Robert Burns from the stigma which had been fastened upon it by Currie.

The same defensive tone has been assumed by various subsequent writers, and by none with greater force of language than by Professor Wilson.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the modern fashion is to write of Burns as if he had been a man of comparatively temperate and pure life, who had been remarkably unfortunate in his early biographers.

The subject is a difficult and a critical one; but I believe it may be possible to admit the truth of what is directly advanced by Findlater and Gray, and yet to see that the original representations of Burns's character were not so unfaithful to truth as has been assumed.

It is, I believe, incontestable, that Burns was a good and efficient officer, always fit for duty during the business part of the day, never known to drink by himself or to indulge in liquor in the forenoon. It is also true that he was amiable in his private domestic relations. Such are the positive averments of Findlater. Mr Gray says he was not a habitual drunkard, which is nearly the same thing that Findlater has advanced; and he draws a delightful picture of the

<sup>1</sup> *Essay on the Genius and Character of Burns, Land of Burns, 1840.*

poet's habits in his family, inferring that one who took so great a charge of his son's education, and whose mind was so clear in the morning, could have no habits which society is entitled to condemn. The facts advanced by Mr Gray may be admitted, but the illogical character of his inference is palpable.

There is not, in reality, anything in Findlater and Gray's statements which denies that Burns, in his latter years at Dumfries, did indulge in tavern and other convivialities to a degree which even for that age was excess. On the contrary, these gentlemen make admissions pretty much to that effect. Neither do they positively deny, what is hinted at by Currie, that our bard descended even lower in the scale of sensual habits. All that they can fairly be said to do, is to refute the notion, whether arising from Currie's memoir or in any other way, that Burns was a habitual drunkard.

What, then, was the fact? From all that can now be learned on respectable testimony, I believe it to have been this: Robert Burns never at any period of his life was habitually under the influence of a love of liquor; he never was, properly speaking, its victim: on this point the statements of Dr Currie are certainly unjust towards the name of Burns. Our bard was nevertheless facile towards social enjoyment, and had himself an immense power of promoting it. Wherever he lived, he naturally fell among the gay and good-natured part of society, and he unavoidably partook of their convivialities, and even, latterly at least, helped to encourage the replenishment of the bowl and the pulling of the fresh bottle—not that he cared much for the liquor, but that, once involved in the flow of merriment, he did not like to interrupt it by leaving the table. Thus, while he was far from being a regular toper, his occasional convivialities occurred, during the latter years of his life, with a degree of frequency, and were carried to a degree of excess, which were much to be deplored. It did not matter much, perhaps, that there was no indulgence before the early dinner hour of that time and place—which was three o'clock—if he *very often* spent the evenings over the bowl, and not unfrequently prolonged the merry-making past the midnight hour. It may be asked what is meant by *very often*; and this it is not easy to answer. But that our bard spent *too many evenings* in this way for the comfort of his family, for his own health and peace of mind, and for the preservation of his dignity as a man and a poet, I believe to be only too true. Nor was this all, for that co-ordinate debasement to which Dr Currie alludes, was not escaped. Let God judge him, a being formed in frailty, and inspired with wild and misdirected impulses; not I. But so is the fact.

Let it be observed, however—though, in following tastes so depraved, Burns necessarily came in contact with persons of both sexes utterly unworthy of his society, and latterly would associate with individuals of such a character as would, on a full explanation, astonish the admirers of his genius—yet he never reached nor even approached that point where a respect for external decency is lost.

He preserved, as far as he could, the air, and performed the duties, of a vigilant government officer and respectable head of a family. He wrote, spoke, and walked about the daylight streets and ways, as a man knowing the value of character in the eye of the world. Incautious as he was in many things, he had yet sufficient tact to abstain from allusions to the coarse merry-making, and the worse debauches which sometimes followed, before those who, being comparatively pure themselves, were sure to have no sympathetic relish for such things. And thus it was that Gray—himself a man of irreproachable life and conversation—had no opportunity of knowing Burns in the whole of his character and habits. Neither, perhaps, had Findlater, with whom, as a superior officer whose good opinion was of consequence, he must have wished in an especial manner to stand well. To many, the actual tastes of the poet were sufficiently well known; and it was of course impossible in a country town to keep his name entirely out of the mouth of scandal. But society is never very severe with those who pay it the homage of a regard to appearances, and Burns was quite the man whom it would wish to spare as much as possible. He was a kind of *lion* in that little town—a great man in one sense, and a man of many excellent properties. The very humility of his position, as something beneath his deserts, excited a feeling in his behalf. His over-convivial habits, his frequent coarseness of speech, his more than suspected aberrations, were therefore regarded by the great bulk of the community with a certain degree of tenderness. And hence, while he on his part seemed to have no idea of being much of a reprobate, the society which surrounded him was not unwilling to take him as far as possible for what he seemed. Another circumstance tending to keep up a certain reputableness about Burns, was the extraordinary attractiveness of his conversation. Men, and women too, of the upper and more refined circles, who might know that he fell into not unfrequent excesses, were nevertheless anxious for the pleasure of his society. For this they overlooked and tolerated much which would have made them comparatively cold towards other men. It is therefore true, that he never was without some friends among these upper circles.

On the whole, then, it appears that there are some grounds for the ill repute which so lamentably invested the name of our great poet for some years after his death, though the facts of the case have been to some extent misstated, and even, it may be said, exaggerated. An endeavour has here been made to state the truth; and if it appear to press more severely on the name of our great national poet than was anticipated, I can only say on my own behalf, that I have taken pains to ascertain it, and to put down nothing less or more—humbly hoping that, where there is so much to admire, the admission of that which must be reprobated still leaves us a grand figure under the worshipped name of BURNS; but it is at all events certain, that any other than a faithful view of the character of the man—that is, a view comprehending the shades as well as the

brightnesses—would be an imperfect thing, a moral *torso*, most unsatisfactory to all judicious minds, and not capable, in the long-run, of imposing upon anybody.

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No. 14.—SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR BURNS'S FAMILY.

LIST IN EDINBURGH NEWSPAPERS, AUGUST 23, 1796.

Subscribed in Dumfriesshire, L.104, 12s.

|                                      |         |                             |
|--------------------------------------|---------|-----------------------------|
| Sir James Hall, .                    | L.5 5 0 | The Right Hon. the Earl     |
| Lord Meadowbank,                     | 1 1 0   | of Selkirk, . L.5 5 0       |
| Prof. D. Stewart, .                  | 3 3 0   | Mr Wm. Robertson, Re-       |
| Dr Duncan, .                         | 1 1 0   | gister Office, . 1 1 0      |
| Mr Mundell, .                        | 1 1 0   | Mr W. Inglis, W. S., 1 1 0  |
| James Gibson, Esq.,                  | 1 1 0   | Mr E. Balfour, . 1 1 0      |
| Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop,                | 2 2 0   | James Gordon, . 0 10 6      |
| Mr Fergusson of Banks,               | 2 2 0   | Mr Inglis, . 0 10 6         |
| Major Duff, .                        | 1 1 0   | A Gentleman, . 1 0 0        |
| Wm. Dunbar, W. S.,                   | 1 1 0   | A Foreigner, . 0 10 6       |
| Jn. Carmichael, Esq., of Skirling, . | 1 1 0   | Arch. Constable, . 0 5 6    |
| Sir J. Sinclair, Bart.,              | 1 1 0   | W. Handyside, W. S., 1 1 0  |
| Mr James Innes, .                    | 2 2 0   | Mr G. Russel, wr., . 1 1 0  |
| Mr Henry Raeburn,                    | 2 2 0   | Mr T. Potts, Kelso, 1 1 0   |
| Mr A. Cunningham,                    | 2 2 0   | Mr Alex. Mackenzie,         |
| Mr Geo. Thomson, .                   | 2 2 0   | writer, . 1 1 0             |
| Mr Rob. Cleghorn,                    | 2 2 0   | Mrs Spalding, . 0 10 6      |
| Mrs Cleghorn, .                      | 1 1 0   | Mr Wm. Creech, 5 5 0        |
| Mr John Allan, .                     | 2 2 0   | Mr Kerr, G. P. O., . 1 1 0  |
| Mr Rob. Wight, .                     | 2 2 0   | Mr Wm. Dallas, . 1 1 0      |
| Mr John Haig, .                      | 2 2 0   | Rev. Dr Greenfield, . 1 1 0 |
| Mr Robert Walker, .                  | 0 10 6  | The Boys of Mr Cririe's     |
| Mr Barclay Fyffe,                    | 2 2 0   | Class in the High           |
|                                      |         | School, . . 1 1 0           |

[A second list, amounting to L.52, 10s. has not been recovered.]

April 4, 1797.

Amount of former Subscriptions, L.119, 9s.

SUBSCRIBERS CONTINUED.

|                                      |         |                                                 |
|--------------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Mr Woods, Theatre-royal, .           | L.1 1 0 | Subscription from Mrs Paterson's Inn, . L.1 1 0 |
| Mr Kemble, Theatre-royal, .          | 2 2 0   | Mrs Fletcher, Queen's Street, . . 1 1 0         |
| Receipt of Benefit at the Theatre, . | 32 1 0  | Mrs Cathcart, Castle Street, . . 1 1 0          |
| John Fergusson, Esq., Calcutta, .    | 10 10 0 | A. W., . . 0 5 0                                |
| Robt. Ainslie, Esq., W.S.,           | 2 2 0   | Mr Johnson, engraver, 4 0 0                     |
| Mr George Brown, .                   | 0 10 6  | Mr Hume of Wedderburn, . . 2 2 0                |
| The Rev. Mr White, .                 | 1 1 0   | James Graham, Esq., 1 1 0                       |

## LONDON LIST, AT CLOSE OF SUBSCRIPTION, MAY 1800.

Subscriptions, L.122, 17s.

|                                   |     |   |    |                         |     |    |   |
|-----------------------------------|-----|---|----|-------------------------|-----|----|---|
| Lord de Dunstanville,             | L.5 | 5 | 0  | J. Campbell, Inverary,  | L.0 | 10 | 6 |
| Thomson Bonar,                    | .   | 5 | 5  | William Douglas,        | .   | 2  | 2 |
| James Shaw,                       | .   | 5 | 5  | Samuel Douglas,         |     | 2  | 2 |
| Robert Sheddien,                  | .   | 5 | 5  | James Douglas,          | .   | 2  | 2 |
| James Mackenzie,                  |     | 5 | 5  | William Borredale,      |     | 2  | 2 |
| Peter Laurie,                     | .   | 5 | 5  | Hugh Mair,              | .   | 2  | 2 |
| John M'Taggart,                   |     | 5 | 5  | Wm. Walker, Birmingham, |     |    |   |
| David Hunter,                     | .   | 5 | 5  | .                       | .   | 2  | 2 |
| J. R. Miller,                     | .   | 5 | 5  | Alex. Walker, ditto,    |     | 2  | 2 |
| Duncan Hunter,                    | .   | 5 | 5  | Capt. Errol Boyd,       |     | 2  | 2 |
| John Inglis,                      | .   | 5 | 5  | Rn. Borradaile,         | .   | 2  | 2 |
| J. Mayne,                         | .   | 5 | 5  | William Pratt,          | .   | 2  | 2 |
| Adam Lymbourner,                  |     | 5 | 5  | John Maitland,          | .   | 2  | 2 |
| Colonel Blair,                    | .   | 3 | 3  | Robert Buchannan,       |     | 2  | 2 |
| John J. Angerstein,               | .   | 2 | 2  | Arch. Tod,              | .   | 2  | 2 |
| John Anderson,                    | .   | 2 | 2  | James Walker,           | .   | 2  | 2 |
| Robert Burns,                     | .   | 2 | 2  | Joseph Berwick,         |     | 2  | 2 |
| James Brymer,                     | .   | 2 | 2  | Charles Hornyold,       | .   | 2  | 2 |
| Dr Moore,                         | .   | 2 | 2  | Colonel A. Gammell,     |     | 2  | 2 |
| David Shaw,                       | .   | 2 | 2  | James Fairlee,          | .   | 1  | 1 |
| W. Parker (Montreal),             |     | 2 | 2  | John Walker,            | .   | 1  | 1 |
| Captain R. Gordon, 71st<br>Regt., | .   | 2 | 2  | Peter Swanson,          | .   | 1  | 1 |
| Matthew Boyd,                     | .   | 2 | 2  | James Colquhoun,        |     | 1  | 1 |
| William Boyd,                     | .   | 2 | 2  | Alex. Riddell,          | .   | 1  | 1 |
| Charles Ferguson,                 | .   | 2 | 2  | Edward Boyd,            | .   | 1  | 1 |
| John Grey,                        | .   | 2 | 2  | James Ketland,          |     | 1  | 1 |
| James Innes,                      | .   | 2 | 2  | John Paterson,          | .   | 1  | 1 |
| John Fraser,                      | .   | 2 | 2  | John Gillespie,         | .   | 1  | 1 |
| James Duff,                       | .   | 2 | 2  | Robert Cowie,           | .   | 1  | 1 |
| Robert Hunter,                    | .   | 2 | 2  | Samuel Lenox,           | .   | 1  | 1 |
| John Rae,                         | .   | 2 | 2  | John Bannatyne,         | .   | 1  | 1 |
| T. Reid,                          | .   | 2 | 2  | William Barclay,        |     | 1  | 1 |
| J. Irving,                        | .   | 2 | 2  | Arch. Mackean,          | .   | 1  | 1 |
| Thomas Main,                      | .   | 1 | 1  | John Scott,             | .   | 1  | 1 |
| John Younger,                     | .   | 1 | 1  | George Morrison,        | .   | 1  | 1 |
| J. Parker,                        | .   | 1 | 1  | George Munro,           | .   | 1  | 1 |
| William Watson,                   | .   | 1 | 1  | Thomas Gordon,          | .   | 1  | 1 |
| Mr Tweedy,                        | .   | 1 | 1  | James Forsyth,          | .   | 1  | 1 |
| Henry Thompson,                   | .   | 1 | 1  | James Bell,             | .   | 1  | 1 |
| A. Learmonth,                     | .   | 1 | 1  | Mark Sprott,            | .   | 1  | 1 |
| Robert Service,                   | .   | 1 | 1  | Wm. Duguld,             | .   | 1  | 1 |
| John Heathcote,                   |     | 1 | 1  | C. Harper,              | .   | 1  | 1 |
| Adam Bell,                        | .   | 1 | 1  | Wm. Ogilvy, jun.,       | .   | 1  | 1 |
| J. F. Throckmorton,               |     | 0 | 10 | John Auldro,            | .   | 1  | 1 |
|                                   |     |   | 6  | Miss Henderson, Dub.,   |     | 1  | 1 |

|                                    |       |   |   |                                                  |       |    |   |
|------------------------------------|-------|---|---|--------------------------------------------------|-------|----|---|
| C. Bellin,                         | . L.1 | 1 | 0 | Alexander Begbee,                                | . L.1 | 1  | 0 |
| Mr Taaffe,                         | . 1   | 1 | 0 | John Tait,                                       | . 1   | 1  | 0 |
| James Dawson,                      | . 1   | 1 | 0 | James Smith,                                     | . 1   | 1  | 0 |
| James Inglis,                      | . 1   | 1 | 0 | Thomas Pinkerton,                                | . 1   | 1  | 0 |
| William Urquhart,                  | . 1   | 1 | 0 | Robert Arthur,                                   | . 1   | 1  | 0 |
| David Maitland,                    | . 1   | 1 | 0 | A. M. Bennett,                                   | . 1   | 1  | 0 |
| R. Hamilton,                       | . 1   | 1 | 0 | Alexander Harper,                                | . 1   | 1  | 0 |
| J. Anderson, sen.,                 | . 1   | 1 | 0 | R. Haden,                                        | . 1   | 1  | 0 |
| A. Glennie,                        | . 1   | 1 | 0 | Thomas Bell,                                     | . 1   | 1  | 0 |
| Hugh Bethune,                      | . 1   | 1 | 0 | Edward Penman,                                   | . 1   | 1  | 0 |
| George Service,                    | . 1   | 1 | 0 | Malcolm Ross,                                    | . 1   | 1  | 0 |
| Cochran M'Clure,                   | . 1   | 1 | 0 | J. Parish, jun., Hambro',                        | . 1   | 1  | 0 |
| Samuel Donaldson,                  | . 1   | 1 | 0 | Joseph Forsyth,                                  | . 1   | 1  | 0 |
| Joseph Rodgers,                    | . 1   | 1 | 0 | Alexander Ross, jun.,                            | . 1   | 1  | 0 |
| Robert Ewing,                      | . 1   | 1 | 0 | George Glenny,                                   | . 1   | 1  | 0 |
| William Graham,                    | . 1   | 1 | 0 | Thomas Watson,                                   | . 1   | 1  | 0 |
| George Reid,                       | . 1   | 1 | 0 | David Maitland,                                  | . 1   | 1  | 0 |
| Peter Swanson, second<br>Donation, | . 1   | 1 | 0 | Dividend on L.400 Stock<br>for half a year, pay- |       |    |   |
| H. S. Dickey,                      | . 1   | 1 | 0 | able in Oct. 1797,                               | 6     | 0  | 0 |
| Rt. Anderson,                      | . 1   | 1 | 0 | Ditto in April 1798, .                           | 6     | 0  | 0 |
| J. G. Gerrard,                     | . 1   | 1 | 0 | Ditto in October 1798,                           | 6     | 0  | 0 |
| George Lyon,                       | . 1   | 1 | 0 | Ditto in April 1799,                             | 6     | 0  | 0 |
| William Christie,                  | . 1   | 1 | 0 | Ditto in October 1799,                           | 6     | 0  | 0 |
| Jos. Lachlan,                      | . 1   | 1 | 0 | Ditto on L.500, April<br>1800, . . . . .         | 7     | 10 | 0 |
| John Lyall,                        | . 1   | 1 | 0 | TOTAL, . . . . .                                 | L.267 | 9  | 0 |

Mr James Shaw, subsequently Sir James Shaw, and chamberlain of London, took upon himself the whole trouble connected with the subscription in the metropolis. He purchased L.400 of the 3 per cent. Reduced Stock in June 1797 at L.50 $\frac{5}{8}$ , and L.100 of the same stock in October 1799 at L.59 ; and this L.500 of stock was transferred in May 1800 to the magistrates of Ayr for the benefit of the poet's family.

'Mr Alderman Shaw, of London, an Ayrshire gentleman, some time after the death of our admired poet, patronised a subscription for the benefit of his widow and children. The sum so raised was vested in the 3 per cent. annuities, and amounted to L.500 of that stock. Last week, the alderman being in company with Sir Francis Baring, the conversation turned on Burns and the circumstances of his family. The worthy baronet, who is a warm admirer of our poet, requested that he also might have the honour of being a contributor, and immediately put into his hands L.100, which was also bought into the same stock, and the receipts sent to the magistrates; and with the L.500 makes L.676, 19s. 10d. 3 per cents, standing in the name of the provost and bailies of the town of Ayr, for the benefit of the widow and children of Robert Burns.'—*Newspaper Paragraph*, 1804.

Another paragraph, of apparently little later date, is as follows:—

'It had lately come to the knowledge of Mr Alderman Shaw, London, that Burns had left two daughters, natural children, who have not hitherto benefited by the liberality of the public to their father's family; which induced that gentleman, whose active benevolence in behalf of this family is well known, to renew a subscription among a few friends for making a small provision for the destitute girls. The subscriptions have amounted to L.310, 11s., at the head of which is fifty guineas from William Fairlie, Esq., Calcutta. With this sum, L.523 have been purchased in the reduced 3 per cents., which, added to that already purchased in the same fund, and together standing in the name of the provost and bailies of the town of Ayr, makes a total of L.1200, of which L.800 is to be appropriated to the use of Mrs Burns and her three sons, and L.400 to the use of the two girls; one moiety payable to each on marriage, or on attaining the age of twenty-one; and in the event of either of them dying under these periods, the moiety due to her to go to the survivor.'

The two girls here referred to were: Elizabeth Burns, the daughter of Elizabeth Paton (i., 87)—born in 1784—who became the wife of Mr John Bishop, overseer at Polkemmet, and died in December 1816, aged thirty-two; and Elizabeth Burns, the daughter of Anne Park, born 31st March 1791 (iii., 260), and who became the wife of — Thomson, weaver, Pollockshaws.

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#### No. 15.—THE CRANIUM OF BURNS.

At the opening of the Mausoleum, March 1834, for the interment of Mrs Burns, it was resolved by some citizens of Dumfries, with the concurrence of the nearest relative of the widow, to raise the cranium of the poet from the grave, and have a cast moulded from it, with a view to gratifying the interest likely to be felt by the students of phrenology respecting its peculiar development. This purpose was carried into effect during the night between the 31st March and the 1st April, and the following is the description of the cranium, drawn up at the time by Mr A. Blacklock, surgeon, one of the individuals present:—

'The cranial bones were perfect in every respect, if we except a little erosion of their external table, and firmly held together by their sutures; even the delicate bones of the orbits, with the trifling exception of the *os unguis* in the left, were sound, and uninjured by death and the grave. The superior maxillary bones still retained the four most posterior teeth on each side, including the dentes sapientiae, and all without spot or blemish; the incisores, cupidati, &c., had in all probability recently dropped from the jaw, for the alveoli were but little decayed. The bones of the face and palate

were also sound. Some small portions of black hair, with a very few gray hairs intermixed, were observed while detaching some extraneous matter from the occiput. Indeed, nothing could exceed the high state of preservation in which we found the bones of the cranium, or offer a fairer opportunity of supplying what has so long been desiderated by phrenologists—a correct model of our immortal poet's head: and in order to accomplish this in the most accurate and satisfactory manner, every particle of sand, or other foreign body, was carefully washed off, and the plaster of Paris applied with all the tact and accuracy of an experienced artist. The cast is admirably taken, and cannot fail to prove highly interesting to phrenologists and others.

'Having completed our intention, the skull, securely enclosed in a leaden case, was again committed to the earth, precisely where we found it.

ARCHD. BLACKLOCK.'

A cast from the skull having been transmitted to the Phrenological Society of Edinburgh, the following view of the cerebral development of Burns was drawn up by Mr George Combe, and published in connection with four views of the cranium (*W. and A. K. Johnston, Edinburgh*):—

'I.—DIMENSIONS OF THE SKULL.

|                                                                  | Inches.          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Greatest circumference,                                          | 22 $\frac{1}{4}$ |
| From Occipital Spine to Individuality, over the top of the head, | 14               |
| — Ear to Ear vertically over the top of the head,                | 13               |
| — Philoprogenitiveness to Individuality (greatest length),       | 8                |
| — Concentrativeness to Comparison,                               | 7 $\frac{1}{2}$  |
| — Ear to Philoprogenitiveness,                                   | 4 $\frac{3}{4}$  |
| — Individuality,                                                 | 4 $\frac{3}{4}$  |
| — Benevolence,                                                   | 5 $\frac{1}{2}$  |
| — Firmness,                                                      | 5 $\frac{1}{2}$  |
| — Destructiveness to Destructiveness,                            | 5 $\frac{3}{4}$  |
| — Secretiveness to Secretiveness,                                | 5 $\frac{5}{8}$  |
| — Cautiousness to Cautiousness,                                  | 5 $\frac{1}{2}$  |
| — Ideality to Ideality,                                          | 4 $\frac{5}{8}$  |
| — Constructiveness to Constructiveness,                          | 4 $\frac{1}{2}$  |
| Mastoid Process to Mastoid Process,                              | 4 $\frac{3}{4}$  |

'II.—DEVELOPMENT OF THE ORGANS.

|                                      | Scale. |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| 1. Amativeness, rather large,        | 16     |
| 2. Philoprogenitiveness, very large, | 20     |
| 3. Concentrativeness, large,         | 18     |
| 4. Adhesiveness, very large,         | 20     |
| 5. Combativeness, very large,        | 20     |
| 6. Destructiveness, large,           | 18     |
| 7. Secretiveness, large,             | 19     |
| 8. Acquisitiveness, rather large,    | 16     |
| 9. Constructiveness, full,           | 15     |
| 10. Self-Esteem, large,              | 18     |
| 11. Love of Approbation, very large, | 20     |
| 12. Cautiousness, large,             | 19     |

|                                 | Scale. |
|---------------------------------|--------|
| 13. Benevolence, very large,    | 20     |
| 14. Veneration, large,          | 18     |
| 15. Firmness, full,             | 15     |
| 16. Conscientiousness, full,    | 15     |
| 17. Hope, full,                 | 14     |
| 18. Wonder, large,              | 18     |
| 19. Ideality, large,            | 18     |
| 20. Wit, or Mirthfulness, full, | 15     |
| 21. Imitation, large,           | 19     |
| 22. Individuality, large,       | 19     |
| 23. Form, rather large,         | 16     |
| 24. Size, rather large,         | 17     |
| 25. Weight, rather large,       | 16     |
| 26. Colouring, rather large,    | 16     |
| 27. Locality, large,            | 18     |
| 28. Number, rather full,        | 12     |
| 29. Order, full,                | 14     |
| 30. Eventuality, large,         | 18     |
| 31. Time, rather large,         | 16     |
| 32. Tune, full,                 | 15     |
| 33. Language, uncertain.        |        |
| 34. Comparison, rather large,   | 17     |
| 35. Causality, large,           | 18     |

‘The scale of the organs indicates their relative proportions to each other: 2 is idiocy; 10, moderate; 14, full; 18, large; and 20, very large.

‘The cast of a skull does not shew the temperament of the individual, but the portraits of Burns indicate the bilious and nervous temperaments, the sources of strength, activity, and susceptibility; and the descriptions given by his contemporaries of his beaming and energetic eye, and the rapidity and impetuosity of his manifestations, establish the inference that his brain was active and susceptible.

‘Size in the brain, other conditions being equal, is the measure of mental power. The skull of Burns indicates a large brain. The length is eight, and the greatest breadth nearly six inches. The circumference is  $22\frac{1}{4}$  inches. These measurements exceed the average of Scotch living heads, *including the integuments*, for which four-eighths of an inch may be allowed.

‘The brain of Burns, therefore, possessed the two elements of power and activity.

‘The portions of the brain which manifest the animal propensities, are uncommonly large, indicating strong passions, and great energy in action under their influence. The group of organs manifesting the domestic affections (Amativeness, Philoprogenitiveness, and Adhesiveness), is large; Philoprogenitiveness uncommonly so for a male head. The organs of Combativeness and Destructiveness are large, bespeaking great heat of temper, impatience, and liability to irritation.

‘Secretiveness and Cautiousness are both large, and would confer considerable power of restraint, where he felt restraint to be necessary.

‘ Acquisitiveness, Self-Esteem, and Love of Approbation, are also in ample endowment, although the first is less than the other two ; these feelings give the love of property, a high consideration of self, and desire of the esteem of others. The first quality will not be so readily conceded to Burns as the second and third, which, indeed, were much stronger ; but the phrenologist records what is presented by nature, in full confidence that the manifestations, when the character is correctly understood, will be found to correspond with the development, and he states that the brain indicates considerable love of property.

‘ The organs of the moral sentiments are also largely developed. Ideality, Wonder, Imitation, and Benevolence, are the largest in size. Veneration also is large. Conscientiousness, Firmness, and Hope, are full.

‘ The Knowing organs, or those of perceptive intellect, are large ; and the organs of Reflection are also considerable, but less than the former. Causality is larger than Comparison, and Wit is less than either.

‘ The skull indicates the combination of strong animal passions with equally powerful moral emotions. If the natural morality had been less, the endowment of the propensities is sufficient to have constituted a character of the most desperate description. The combination as it exists, bespeaks a mind extremely subject to contending emotions—capable of great good or great evil—and encompassed with vast difficulties in preserving a steady, even, onward course of practical morality.

‘ In the combination of very large Philoprogenitiveness and Adhesiveness, with very large Benevolence and large Ideality, we find the elements of that exquisite tenderness and refinement, which Burns so frequently manifested, even when at the worst stage of his career. In the combination of great Combativeness, Destructiveness, and Self-Esteem, we find the fundamental qualities which inspired *Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled*, and similar productions.

‘ The combination of large Secretiveness, Imitation, and the perceptive organs, gives the elements of his dramatic talent and humour. The skull indicates a decided talent for Humour, but less for Wit. The public are apt to confound the talents for Wit and Humour. The metaphysicians, however, have distinguished them, and in the phrenological works their different elements are pointed out. Burns possessed the talent for satire ; Destructiveness, added to the combination which gives Humour, produces it.

‘ An unskilful observer looking at the forehead, might suppose it to be moderate in size ; but when the dimensions of the anterior lobe, in both length and breadth, are attended to, the Intellectual organs will be recognised to have been large. The anterior lobe projects so much, that it gives an appearance of narrowness to the forehead which is not real. This is the cause, also, why Benevolence appears to lie further back than usual. An anterior lobe of this magnitude indicates great Intellectual power. The combination of large

Percptive and Reflecting organs (Causality predominant), with large Concentrativeness and large organs of the feelings, gives that sagacity and vigorous common sense for which Burns was distinguished.

'The skull rises high above Causality, and spreads wide in the region of Ideality; the strength of his moral feelings lay in that region.'

'The combination of large organs of the Animal Propensities, with large Cautiousness, and only full Hope, together with the unfavourable circumstances in which he was placed, accounts for the melancholy and internal unhappiness with which Burns was so frequently afflicted. This melancholy was rendered still deeper by bad health.'

'The combination of Acquisitiveness, Cautiousness, Love of Approbation, and Conscientiousness, is the source of his keen feelings in regard to pecuniary independence. The great power of his Animal Propensities would give him strong temptations to waste; but the combination just mentioned would impose a powerful restraint. The head indicates the elements of an economical character, and it is known that he died free from debt, notwithstanding the smallness of his salary.'

'No phrenologist can look upon this head, and consider the circumstances in which Burns was placed, without vivid feelings of regret. Burns must have walked the earth with a consciousness of great superiority over his associates in the station in which he was placed—of powers calculated for a far higher sphere than that which he was able to reach—and of passions which he could with difficulty restrain, and which it was fatal to indulge. If he had been placed from infancy in the higher ranks of life, liberally educated, and employed in pursuits corresponding to his powers, the inferior portion of his nature would have lost part of its energy, while his better qualities would have assumed a decided and permanent superiority.'

A more elaborate paper on the skull of Burns appeared in the *Phrenological Journal*, No. XLI., from the pen of Mr Robert Cox. This gentleman endeavours to shew that the character of Burns was in conformity with the full development of acquisitiveness. 'According to his own description,' says Mr Cox, 'he was a man who "had little art in making money, and still less in keeping it." That his art in making money was sufficiently moderate, there can be no doubt, for he was engaged in occupations which his soul loathed, and thought it below his dignity to accept of pecuniary remuneration for some of his most laborious literary performances. He was, however, by no means insensible to the value of money, and never threw it away. On the contrary, he was remarkably frugal, except when feelings stronger than acquisitiveness came into play—such as benevolence, adhesiveness, and love of approbation; the organs of all which are very large, while acquisitiveness is only rather large. During his residence at Mossgiel, where his revenue was not more than £.7, his expenses, as Gilbert mentions, "never in any one year exceeded his slender income." It is also well known, that he did not

leave behind him a shilling of debt ; and I have learned from good authority, that his household was much more frugally managed at Dumfries than at Ellisland—as in the former place, but not in the latter, he had it in his power to exercise a personal control over the expenditure. I have been told also, that, after his death, the domestic expenses were greater than when he was alive. These facts are all consistent with a considerable development of acquisitiveness, for, when that organ is small, there is habitual inattention to pecuniary concerns, even although the love of independence and dislike to ask a favour be strong. The indifference with respect to money which Burns occasionally ascribes to himself, appears, therefore, to savour of affectation—a failing into which he was not unfrequently led by love of approbation and secretiveness. Indeed, in one of his letters to Miss Chalmers, he expressly intimates a wish to be rich.' The whole of this essay is highly worthy of perusal by all who take an interest in the character of the Ayrshire bard.

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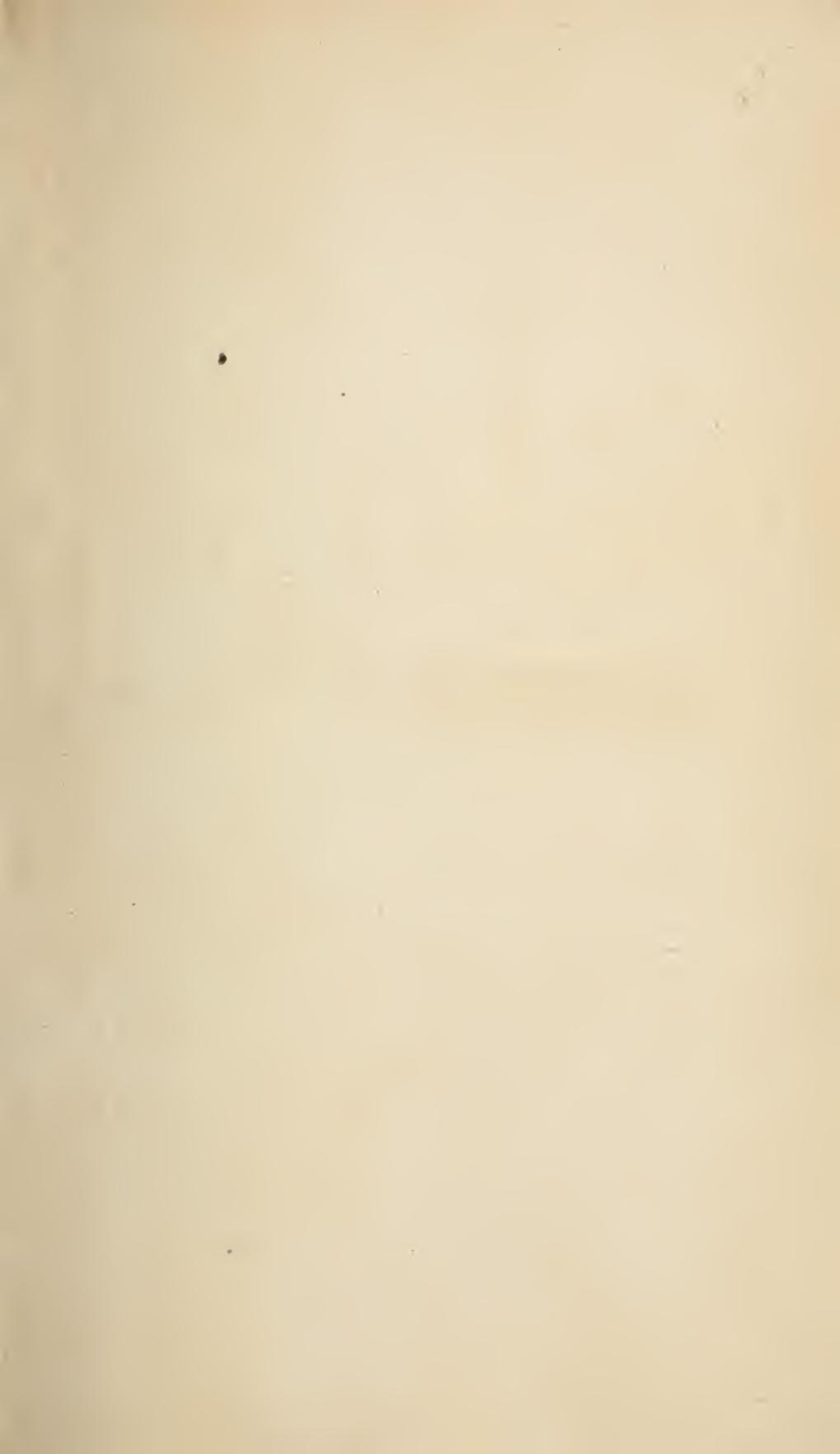


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